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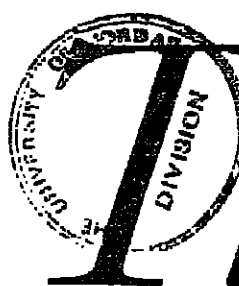
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Going public

Farewell Capel

Saturday February 7 1998

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Azerbaijani M 1.50
Belarusian B 1.50
Belgian F 1.50
Bosnian B 1.50
Bulgarian B 1.50
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Polish Z 1.50
Portuguese E 1.50
Romanian R 1.50
Russian R 1.50
Serbian D 1.50
Slovakian S 1.50
Slovenian S 1.50
Spanish P 1.50
Swedish S 1.50
Swiss S 1.50
Thai B 1.50
Turkish L 1.50
Ukrainian U 1.50
USA D 1.50



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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Beauty is a dangerous business

Heroin on the catwalk: the truth

The Week, page 17



Five nations preview

The state of the Union

The Week, Sport page 24



Interview

A change of heart for Sir Peregrine

The Week, page 15

'Morbidity' for father of the bride

Scargill's not so Brassed Off as daughter prepares to marry man who helped close pit

Martin Wainwright

MINERS' leader Arthur Scargill is working on one of the toughest speeches of his long career — at the wedding of his daughter to a former colliery manager who helped shut Britain's most famous pit.

The groom, James Logan, also faces a sticky time at the celebration — his office at Grimethorpe mine was superannuated in 1992 by his future mother-in-law Anne, leader of Women Against Pit Closures.

"It all came out for definite when Margaret took me home to meet her parents," said Mr Logan, aged 42, who fell for Mr Scargill's daughter after moving as business manager to the medical practice in Barnsley, where she is a GP. He was ready for possible embarrassment about his mining connections, but had no idea that he was about to meet his office saboteur.

Security cameras had recorded a blonde woman sneaking along the corridor, he said, and giving his lock with a tube of adhesive the day before miners marched out of Grimethorpe for the last time. He had angrily kicked in the door at the pit offices, which were coincidentally used for the recent hit film *Brassed Off*, featuring a similar cross-the-picketline romance between a young miner and a surveyor working at fictional "Grimley" for British Coal.

Mrs Scargill and other Women Against Pit Closure activists were at the pit on October 31, when the last production shift left the colliery, with the production indicator's dot matrix sign still flashing up a profitable £1.25 per gigajoule. The pit finally shut after a 90 day review, with redundancy offers leeching away support, as miners wanted to carry on working from nearly 800 to 630 within a month.

"I never knew who the woman was until I was introduced to Margaret's mum," said Mr Logan. "Then I recognised her straight away. We were introduced but I already knew her. She was the woman who had glued my office door shut."

Mrs Scargill, whose record of imaginative stunts includes raids on government offices and Michael Heseltine's garden, promptly came clean. She told Mr Logan: "I was the culprit." She later admitted: "That first meeting was quite embarrassing for all of us."



Margaret Scargill with her fiancé James Logan, above, and with her parents Arthur and Anne at Huddersfield university in 1992, below



Mr Logan still had the National Union of Mineworkers' leader Arthur Scargill to persuade that a former Grimethorpe boss was suitable material for his daughter's hand. But he needn't have worried.

"When I told him about the glue incident, he laughed his head off," Brenda Nixon, Mrs Scargill's main lieutenant in the pit closure battle and later a by-election candidate for Mr Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, said last night. "I suppose there's a certain morbidity in it. I'm not sure it's the first job he'd have chosen for a son-in-law."

The couple will be married later this year.

Blair stakes reputation on Clinton

Martin Kettle in Washington

TONY Blair placed his personal and political authority on the line yesterday as he backed President Bill Clinton, who refused to consider resignation amid an upsurge of fresh charges in the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Appearing with Mr Clinton at a joint press conference at the White House, the Prime Minister urged the United States president to "stay focused" and deliver what he was elected to deliver.

Mr Blair called Mr Clinton: "Someone I could trust, someone I could rely upon, someone I am proud to call not just a colleague but a friend."

Both leaders knew the press conference, held at the end of the Washington stage of Mr Blair's successful US visit, would be dominated by questions about Mr Clinton's denial of an affair with Ms Lewinsky and by fresh charges in yesterday's US newspapers that he put pressure on his secretary, Betty Currie, to bend her testimony in his favour.

In the most dramatic confrontation with his media accusers, Mr Clinton was asked whether he would resign over the controversy. The president replied in a hushed voice: "Never."

He added: "I would never walk away from the people of America and the trust they placed in me. I'm going to just keep showing up for work." He said "the pain threshold" in public life had been raised but that he was determined to complete his work on behalf of "ordinary people".

Tomorrow the world...

TONY Blair wants to create a worldwide movement of centre-left political parties which would share ideas and common goals, he revealed yesterday.

In an exclusive interview with the Guardian, the Prime Minister spoke of his long-term plan to head an international conference bringing together progressive parties from different nations.

Mr Blair also revealed plans for a series of conferences to bring together academics, intellectuals

and researchers with his own policy makers with the aim of generating a closer relationship between academia and government.

He said: "We on the centre-left must try to put ourselves at the forefront of those who are trying to manage social change in the global economy. The old left resisted that change. The new right did not want to manage it. We have to manage that change to produce social solidarity and prosperity."

Blair interview, page 3

The fresh allegations are that Mrs Currie, Mr Clinton's personal secretary, had a meeting with him on January 18, the day after he gave six hours of evidence on oath to Paula Jones's lawyers. The New York Times alleged that Mr Clinton tried to steer his secretary into agreeing with remarks about his relationship with Ms Lewinsky, such as, "We were never alone, right?"

In a statement issued by her lawyers yesterday, Mrs Currie denied the media version of events, saying: "To the extent there is any implication or the slightest suggestion that Mrs Currie believed

that the president, or anyone else, tried to influence her recollection, that is absolutely false and a mischaracterisation of the facts."

Mr Clinton told the press conference: "I never asked anybody to do anything but tell the truth." He said he was "pleased" by the statement from Mrs Currie's lawyers, but he refused to give any details about his relations with Ms Lewinsky.

Mr Clinton's lawyers were yesterday believed to be preparing a counter-attack against the independent counsel, Kenneth Starr, seeking to have his investigations halted

because of alleged leaks from his office. The president's lawyer, David Kendall, was expected to ask a federal court to authorise an investigation of the leaks.

The White House press secretary, Mike McCurry, said the leaks were "approaching the point where it's beyond appalling and it's dangerous".

Mr Starr said of a possible leak from his office: "I do not have an explanation. I'm very concerned. If there was an act of unprofessional activity, I am confident we will find it out."

A behind-the-scenes effort to broker a deal under which Ms Lewinsky would be given immunity from prosecution in return for giving evidence against Mr Clinton evolved into a public slanging match between Ms Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, and Mr Starr.

Mr Ginsburg accused Mr Starr's office of attempting to "pressure Ms Lewinsky into statements that are not true".

Mr Starr, speaking in Little Rock, said his office would not consider requests for immunity as long as Mr Ginsburg refused to have a face-to-face interview.

Mr Clinton's predicament overshadowed the final day of Mr Blair's Washington visit. In a speech at the state department, Mr Blair hinted the labour government's economic strictness would continue into 2000.

Promising "two tough years", he said the Conservative inheritance had included inflation, a structural public deficit and an inadequate education system. "To turn it around takes time," he said.

Leader comment, page 8

BA to team up with US airline

Keith Harper and Martin Walker in Brussels

THE controversial global alliance between British Airways and American Airlines is set for final approval from US and European regulators, after the latest meeting between President Clinton and Tony Blair in Washington last night.

The alliance, which would turn BA and AA into the world's second most powerful airline grouping, is expected to be announced soon. The deal would give the companies more than 60 per cent of traffic on the North American route.

The closeness between Mr Blair and President Clinton has virtually decided the successful outcome to a series of lengthy negotiations and objections which have been going on for 18 months. Both men have agreed that their governments must press ahead with the deal and break the log jam.

The alliance moved one step closer yesterday after BA confirmed that it was closing 17 city ticket offices in the United States where AA and other American airlines had offices. Unofficial BA sources suggested this was the company's opening shot to rationalise its American operation. Its US

staff are to be offered other jobs, but BA agreed the decision would lead to cost and savings. It denied it was involved in talks with AA on a multi-million pound poster and advertising campaign to project the new alliance.

In Brussels, where the merger has been held up by EU competition officials pending an agreement by the airlines to give up slots at Heathrow for ones at Gatwick, Commission sources agreed the deal was close.

Officials yesterday stressed: "We are totally in favour of European carriers being able to exploit markets as fully as possible. The question has always been on what terms, and how to guarantee real competition."

Brussels had expected the Clinton-Blair summit to give new momentum to a commercial deal which symbolises the leaders' commitment to closer US-British ties.

British officials in Europe have argued that the increasingly pro-European stance of the British government deserved some tangible EU recognition.

BA and American Airlines say that by co-ordinating their networks, they will offer the widest choice of routings and departure times between thousands of locations.



déclaration
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Inside

Britain

Labour made a fresh attack on the BBC for giving airtime to an astonishing attack on the party by maverick MP Brian Sedgwick-Pere

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Police examine the scene of a suicide bombing in Colombo that killed nine people yesterday, hours after Prince Charles left Sri Lanka

PHOTOGRAPH: AMURUDHA LOKHAPURARACHCHI

Bomb follows prince's visit

Luke Harding in Kathmandu

A FEMALE suicide bomber blew herself up, killing eight other people and wounding more than 15 in Colombo just hours after Prince Charles flew out of the Sri Lankan capital yesterday.

The bomb went off less than a mile from where the prince had been staying at the end of a four-day tour which had almost been cancelled because of security fears.

Prince Charles last night

described the attack as an "enormous tragedy". Speaking at an official banquet in Kathmandu last night, he said he had sent a message of sympathy to the Sri Lankan president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, adding: "Obviously it is an enormous tragedy. I have the greatest sympathy for all those people, particularly the families of those who were killed or wounded."

The bomb was detonated when air force officials stopped a white van in Colombo's commercial district. Slave Island, and asked pas-

sengers to get out for a routine check. "The woman got off with a briefcase, and as she approached the sentry the bomb went off," a police spokesman said.

Three men and two women from the airforce were killed, along with two civilians.

The suicide bombing came two days after Sri Lanka celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence from Britain.

Two Tamil Tiger cells were known to be active in Colombo, and many of the prince's engagements were cancelled because of security fears.

Last month 17 people were

killed — and the venue for independence celebrations shifted — after suicide bombings detonated a lorry outside a Buddhist shrine in the hill town of Kandy.

Although the Tamils are regarded as pro-British, royal protection officers were concerned the prince could be the accidental victim of an attack.

Security for the royal tour was unprecedented, with Colombo virtually reduced to a ghost town because of road closures and army patrols.

The celebrations have been boycotted in the Tamil north and east.

The bomb went off six hours after Charles flew to Nepal for the second leg of a 10-day tour which also includes Bhutan. The prince's personal detective, Colin Triningham, is believed to have still been in Colombo when the blast went off.

In Kathmandu the prince was shown round a restored 17th-century royal palace in Patan. He described the temple as "spectacularly beautiful".

Later he attended an official banquet hosted by the crown prince of Nepal, Dipendra Shah.

The Nepalese prince

recalled the visit of Diana, Princess of Wales, to Kathmandu four years ago — one of her first solo engagements on behalf of the Red Cross. He recalled her "compassion for the destitute", and said: "We were deeply saddened by her tragic and untimely demise."

Charles made no mention of Diana in his reply but instead declared how "wonderful" it was to be back with old friends.

The prince will today trek for four-and-a-half hours through the Himalayan foothills before inspecting a forestry project.

Street football faces red card in Gaza's home town

John Duncan
Sports Correspondent

THE writing could be on the wall for English football. The streets of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, where Paul Gascoigne first kicked a ball and honed his skills — bursting into tears when his mum called him in for tea, mimicking a flute-player to annoy the boys who had to go to music classes — could soon be football-free if the local council has its way.

Gateshead metropolitan borough council has succumbed to complaints from residents and motorists and applied to the Transport Secretary to have "No ball games" signs put up on all Gateshead streets.

"The council is receiving a lot of complaints about football in the street," said a council spokesman, "hanging from council windows about broken windows to balls thumping continually against walls. There's also the problem of kids running out into the street and not looking where they are going."

The North-east is widely recognised as the nursery of English football — more professionals come from the area per capita than any other part of the country — and several of the biggest stars of world football put their skill down to hours of play in the streets.

The Charlton brothers hammered balls against the wall of their backyard in the cobble streets outside their

home in Ashington, Northumberland. Gascoigne would play with schoolmates in the streets and alleys near his home in Gateshead's Dunston district.

There was an angry reaction to the plans from one former Newcastle United hero Malcolm Macdonald.

"Not only would such a ban do untold damage to the North-east, it would damage the whole football pyramid, including the national game," he said.

The council has made a big effort to provide other facilities for local children to play football, according to Mike Newton, the director of leisure services.

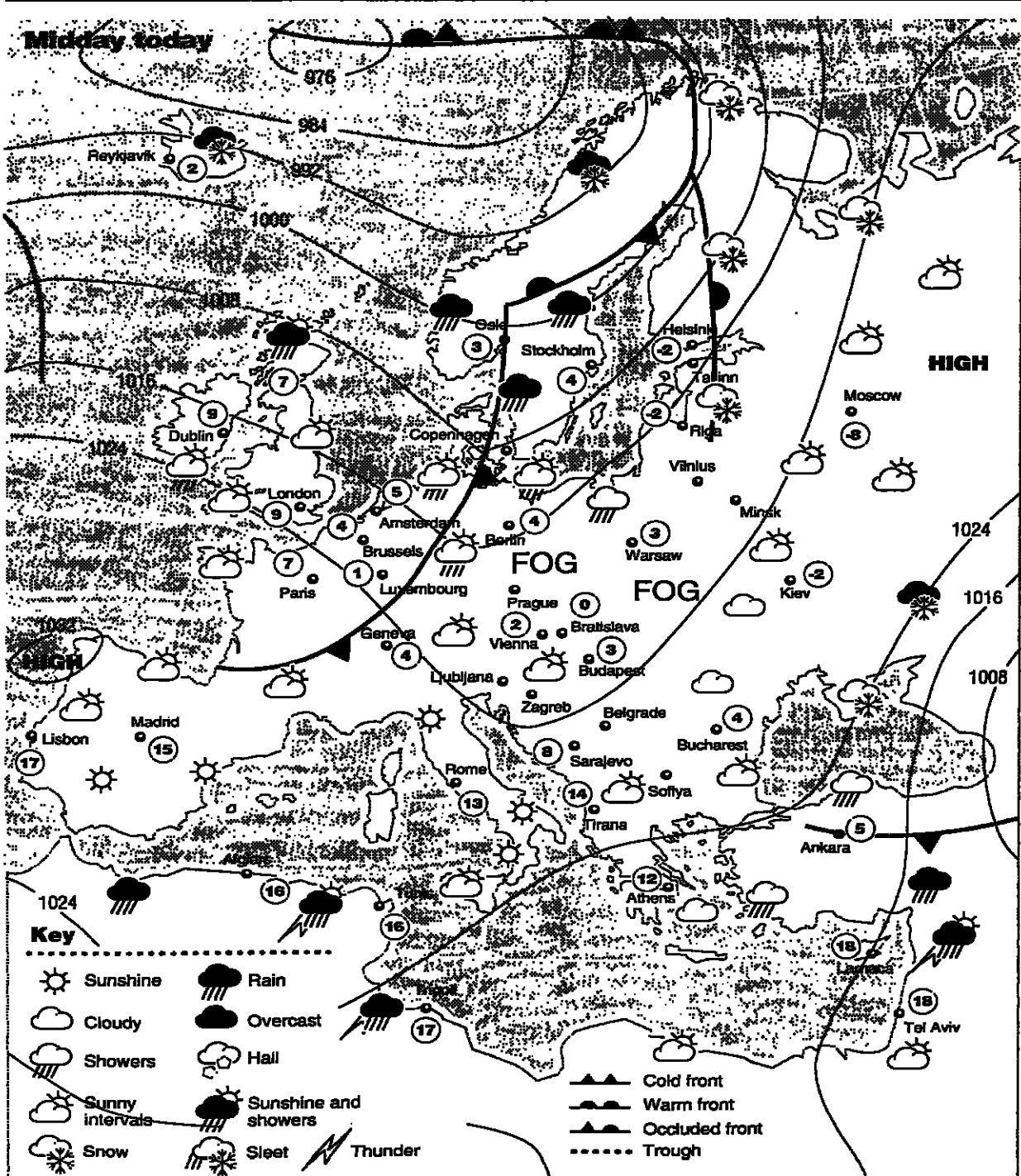
One of the problems is that while facilities are far superior to the days of the Charltons and Milburns, parents are more nervous about letting children out of their sight.

"Supervision is a problem," said Mr Newton, "especially since the demise of the park-keeper."

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, responsible for all highway signs, says privately that it does not want anything to do with the Gateshead plan.

But, in true park-keeper fashion, the council has been studying the regulations. "It won't be the end of the matter if they do reject it," said a council spokesman. "Section 161 (3) of the 1980 Road Traffic Act makes it a specific offence for a person to play football in the street to the annoyance of a road user."

The weather in Europe



Forecast for the cities

City	Today	Tomorrow
Algeria	16 7 F	17 8 F
Amsterdam	11 7 C	12 8 C
Antwerp	11 7 C	12 8 C
Berlin	11 7 C	12 8 C
Bombay	11 7 C	12 8 C
Brussels	11 7 C	12 8 C
Copenhagen	11 7 C	12 8 C
Dublin	11 7 C	12 8 C
Geneva	11 7 C	12 8 C
Lisbon	11 7 C	12 8 C
London	11 7 C	12 8 C
Madrid	11 7 C	12 8 C
Moscow	11 7 C	12 8 C
Nice	11 7 C	12 8 C
Paris	11 7 C	12 8 C
Rome	11 7 C	12 8 C
Stockholm	11 7 C	12 8 C
Toronto	11 7 C	12 8 C
Vienna	11 7 C	12 8 C

Around the world

City	Today	Tomorrow
Algeria	16 7 F	17 8 F
Amsterdam	11 7 C	12 8 C
Antwerp	11 7 C	12 8 C
Berlin	11 7 C	12 8 C
Bombay	11 7 C	12 8 C
Brussels	11 7 C	12 8 C
Copenhagen	11 7 C	12 8 C
Dublin	11 7 C	12 8 C
Geneva	11 7 C	12 8 C
Lisbon	11 7 C	12 8 C
London	11 7 C	12 8 C
Madrid	11 7 C	12 8 C
Moscow	11 7 C	12 8 C
Nice	11 7 C	12 8 C
Paris	11 7 C	12 8 C
Rome	11 7 C	12 8 C
Stockholm	11 7 C	12 8 C
Toronto	11 7 C	12 8 C
Vienna	11 7 C	12 8 C

European weather outlook

Western Norway and southern Sweden will be mild, wet and windy. Most other parts will be cold with some snow, but eastern Sweden will be dry. Max temps ranging from a chilly -15C (5F) in the north, but up to 7C (45F) along the western Fjords of Norway.

Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland

The Low Countries and northern Germany may see a few showers, but most other places will be dry with sunshine, although overnight frost and fog will be slow to clear from southern Germany again. Max temps around 10C (50F) in the Netherlands.

Spain and Portugal

The north-west and Paris Basin may see a few showers, but it will be mostly dry elsewhere with good sunny spells, especially in the south where there will be a frost to start. Max temps 10C (41F) in the frosty areas, 14C on the south coast.

Television and radio — Saturday

Time	Channel	Programme
8.00am	BBC 1	News, 8.05am News, 8.30am News, 8.55am News, 9.00am News, 9.15am News, 9.30am News, 9.45am News, 10.00am News, 10.15am News, 10.30am News, 10.45am News, 11.00am News, 11.15am News, 11.30am News, 11.45am News, 12.00pm News, 12.15pm News, 12.30pm News, 12.45pm News, 1.00pm News, 1.15pm News, 1.30pm News, 1.45pm News, 2.00pm News, 2.15pm News, 2.30pm News, 2.45pm News, 3.00pm News, 3.15pm News, 3.30pm News, 3.45pm News, 4.00pm News, 4.15pm News, 4.30pm News, 4.45pm News, 5.00pm News, 5.15pm News, 5.30pm News, 5.45pm News, 6.00pm News, 6.15pm News, 6.30pm News, 6.45pm News, 7.00pm News, 7.15pm News, 7.30pm News, 7.45pm News, 8.00pm News, 8.15pm News, 8.30pm News, 8.45pm News, 9.00pm News, 9.15pm News, 9.30pm News, 9.45pm News, 10.00pm News, 10.15pm News, 10.30pm News, 10.45pm News, 11.00pm News, 11.15pm News, 11.30pm News, 11.45pm News, 12.00am News, 12.15am News, 12.30am News, 12.45am News, 1.00am News, 1.15am News, 1.30am News, 1.45am News, 2.00am News, 2.15am News, 2.30am 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The next step: a blueprint for New Labour's world role

Martin Kettle in Washington

BUOYED by his warm welcome at the White House this week, Tony Blair spoke ambitiously in Washington yesterday of his long-term plan to put New Labour at the head of a worldwide movement of ideas and create an international consensus of the centre-left for the 21st century.

In an exclusive interview with the Guardian in Blair House, where he has been staying during his Washington visit, the Prime Minister unveiled his blueprint for reuniting the disparate parties of the left in their most far-reaching link-up for decades.

Mr Blair made clear his eventual aim is to bring together the diverse progressive parties of western and eastern Europe, North and South America, and many other countries in a common political response to the challenges of the global economy.

As a first step the Prime Minister and President Bill Clinton will host a conference in London in May to cement the joint policy thinking of the Democrats and Mr Blair's New Labour party.

Mr Blair and Mr Clinton joined teams of British and US advisers and intellectuals yesterday for a preliminary session at the White House, which advisers dubbed the "workathon" — after "work", US slang for a policy expert.

The British-American initiative will be followed by a more ambitious attempt to bring centre-left parties from around the world to London in late 1998 or early 1999, to discuss common approaches to economic and social policies. Mr Blair wants this to be the first meeting of what would become a standing conference of the worldwide centre-left.

The purpose is to craft and define centre-left philosophy for the world of today," Mr Blair said as he prepared to meet Vice-President Al Gore for a working breakfast yesterday.

"I want to start with the ideology that links Labour and the Democrats. Then I want to bring together the Anglo-Saxon definitions of these ideas and these policies with the European ones."

The Prime Minister said: "Every time that I meet these people I find that we are really talking about the same things."

"We on the centre-left must try to put ourselves at the forefront of those who are trying to manage social change in the global economy. The old left resisted that change. The new right did not want to manage it. We have to manage that change to produce social solidarity and prosperity."

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Tony Blair: Enlisted President Bill Clinton in a plan to put New Labour and the US Democrats in the vanguard of a worldwide centre-left movement

He sketched out what he called "five clear principles of the centre-left", to which he referred in a speech at the US state department yesterday warning of "two tough years" ahead in his efforts to turn around the legacy of 18 years of Conservative rule.

These principles are:
□ first, "stable management and economic prudence because of the global economy";
□ second, "changing the emphasis of government intervention so that it deals with education, training and infrastructure and not things like industrial intervention or tax and spend";

□ third, "we must be reformers of the welfare state, otherwise the right will dismantle it";
□ fourth, "reinventing government, decentralisation, opening up government so

that what counts is what works";
□ fifth, "we must be internationalist and oppose the right's isolationism".

Mr Blair said he was very impressed that Mr Clinton's State of the Union speech last week contained so much overlap with New Labour policy.

He cited Mr Clinton's pledges on school class sizes and welfare reform, and the president's use of terms including "the many not the few", "third way" and "one nation", which are familiar from his own speeches.

"These themes are increasingly echoed by the centre-left around Europe," he said. "There's a new confidence. It's all about ensuring social justice and shared prosperity in the modern world."

Setting out his plans, Mr Blair said: "I want us to start

a new standing conference of the centre-left, involving the Labour Party, the Democrats, the European socialist and social democratic parties and beyond.

"All this is at a very tentative stage, but the plans are in place. We will hold a further event in London in May, a seminar or a small conference between ourselves and the Democrats. Then after that we will attempt to build it out with the Europeans, the Australians and all of the parties that are on the same wavelength."

The Prime Minister confirmed that President Clinton would take part in the May event, which would be held immediately before or after

the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Birmingham. The international follow-up conference, he said, would take place either at the end of this year or the start of next.

He admitted the Democrats might be "more nervous than we are" about his long-term thinking but emphasised that he wanted to reach out beyond the Atlantic and Europe to leaders around the world.

Mr Blair specified President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil as one. "He's a very interesting guy. He came to see me in London a while back and he gave me a copy of my speeches in Portuguese that have been published in Brazil with an introduction by him. I got the introduction

translated and I was really amazed when I realised that this guy was talking the same language. It was straight down-the-line New Labour."

The Prime Minister stressed that there should be no "entry tests" of centre-left parties before traditional left-wing parties are invited to join his plans. "It is important that this initiative is unifying and not divisive. There can't be entry tests for this. And it's crucial to bind in the American centre-left. But I think they're up for it."

Mr Blair said he was committed "to engage with all sections of the European centre-left and not just the ones who appear to be most obviously close to where we are at the

moment". That meant the French Socialists and the German Social Democrats would be welcomed, alongside the Dutch, Italians and Portuguese.

He spoke warmly of eastern European parties which have become "less market-frenzied" and are acquiring a "more modulated view of how markets interact with society".

He said: "I am repeatedly struck by the complete and total identity of ideas in so many countries. People are really interested in this. When I talk with other leaders, they say, 'That's my problem, too'. That's why I am absolutely committed to this debate."

Woman solicitor's sex bias claim puts Irvine back in firing line

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

THE beleaguered Lord Chancellor was facing fresh embarrassment last night with the revelation that a senior woman solicitor has launched a sex discrimination claim against him.

Jane Coker, aged 43, has filed an application at London south industrial tribunal accusing Lord Irvine and his department of discrimination in appointing his special adviser, Garry Hart, on the "old boy's network".

The case opens a new line of attack on the Lord Chancellor, who was savaged in newspapers yesterday for his suggestion that the Press Complaints Commission should have power to suppress such revelations as the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's affair with his constituency secretary, Gaynor Regan.

Ms Coker, a longtime Labour supporter who helped draft briefing papers on legislative amendments for the party in opposition, said she would have applied for the post as adviser on the law had she known that it was available.

The tribunal case, coming so soon after the disclosure that Mr Cook considered appointing Ms Regan as his diary secretary, will expose



Jane Coker: 'job was not advertised'

Labour to renewed allegations of favouritism.

Mr Hart, who takes up his £73,484 job on March 2, is an old Islington friend of Tony Blair, and neighbour of the Solicitor General, Lord Falconer.

He was a partner in the big City law firm Herbert Smith, and regularly briefed Lord Irvine when he was at the Bar. His specialisms — planning law and office developments — are not noticeably relevant to the Lord Chancellor's remit.

Labour faced criticism only two months ago when the plum post of "treasury devil" — the Government's No 1 ad-

vocate in the civil courts — went to a barrister in Lord Irvine's former chambers, Philip Sales, bypassing three other candidates with more experience in public law who were seen as the front-runners.

The Government said that the appointment had been made by the Attorney General, John Morris, and that the Lord Chancellor had played no part in it.

Ms Coker is a specialist in immigration and child care law. She set up her own legal aid firm in Tottenham, north London, in 1982. Her firm has been helping to pilot the Lord Chancellor's planned reforms to the legal aid green form advice scheme. She said she was ready for a new direction in her career, having applied unsuccessfully to become a judge.

She said: "Failure to advertise jobs and to make them openly available flies in the face of equal opportunities. Women and ethnic minority solicitors barely feature in the diques of lawyers that surround the Government."

"The Government has been going on about equal opportunities and encouraging more women to get involved. But you don't get that if you appoint your mates."

The application alleges that the department discriminated

against her by failing to advertise the post and to set up an objective selection procedure.

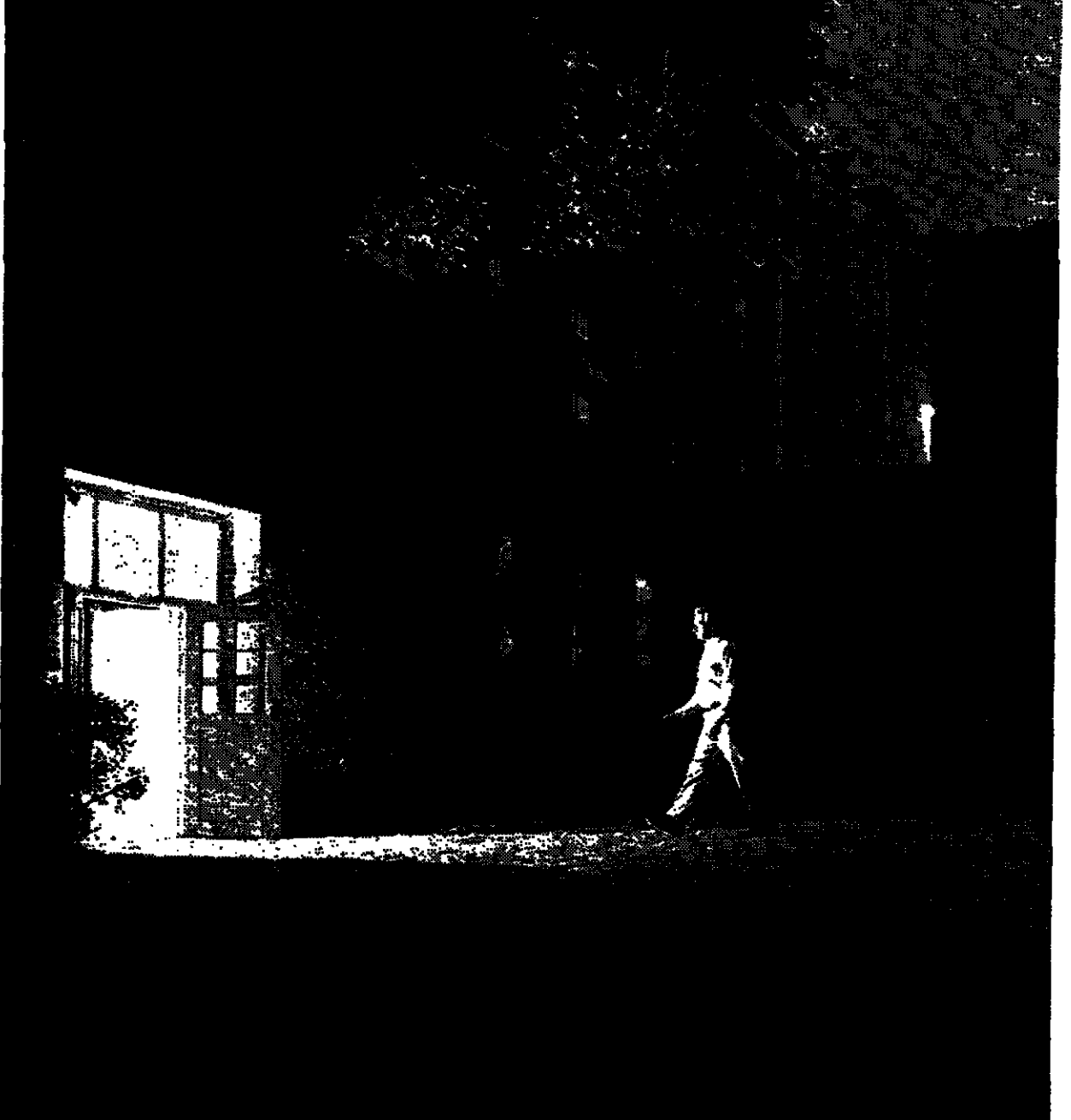
In particular, she claims staff are selected "from within a circle of persons known personally to the Lord Chancellor and/or his Labour Party colleagues and/or his ministerial colleagues."

She argues that the arrangements for filling the post contravene the Sex Discrimination Act and the European directive on equal treatment of men and women. The act makes it unlawful to discriminate against women in the arrangements for determining who should be offered employment.

If Ms Coker succeeds, damages could be unlimited but in practice the tribunal would probably make only a small award for injury to feelings.

Her solicitor, Jane Deighton, said: "She has a very high chance of success. European law says there should be no discrimination altogether in access to all jobs."

A Cabinet Office spokesman said special advisers were chosen personally by ministers, though they had to have the approval of the Prime Minister. "They are personal appointments so the normal civil service rules on appointment are not relevant in this matter."



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February 13, 27 & 415
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April 3, 17, 24 & 415 - April 10 & 430
May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 & 415 - Jun 5, 12, 19, 26 & 435

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Rolls Royce in firing line on Saudi deal

David Pallister
Richard Norton-Taylor
and Owen Bowcott

SECRET negotiations between Rolls Royce and the Saudi Arabia deal have broken down over a politically embarrassing dispute concerning millions of pounds of commission payments under the £20 billion Al Yamamah defence deal.

A Panamanian company controlled by members of the Al Ibrahim family yesterday reissued a writ in the High Court claiming Rolls Royce had reneged on an agreement to pay 15 per cent commission on engines for nearly 200 British Aerospace Tornado and Hawk aircraft delivered over the past 10 years.

The legal move exposing enormous hidden payments comes at a time when the future of the contract — supporting 50,000 British jobs — is under threat and MPs are pressing for the details to be made more transparent.

The Al Ibrahims are nine brothers; their sister is the mother of the 75-year-old King Fahd's preferred son, Abdul Aziz.

Through Aerospace Engineering Design Corporation of Panama, the family has expected to make up to £30 million on the £500 million deal but they claim Rolls Royce has only acknowledged commissions of £23 million for an unspecified number of engines at a rate of 8 per cent.

The company first issued its writ on December 12, causing ill-disguised panic in the boardrooms of Rolls Royce and BAe, which is the prime contractor for the deal. Successive British defence ministers have denied that commissions were paid on the government-to-government contract signed in 1988 and paid for in oil.

Last month the writ was withdrawn as negotiations took place between two heavyweight London law firms, Freshfields and Rolls Royce and Davis Arnold Cooper for AEDC. Yesterday's amended writ specifically excluded the commercially sensitive price of each engine at the request of Rolls Royce.

The bulk of Al Yamamah is already winding down. The final aircraft are due to be delivered by the end of this year, but important provision of ongoing ancillary services was expected. Although BAe hopes for more orders, Saudi watchers believe that the Saudi royal family, squeezed for cash because of the drop in oil prices, wants to diversify its annual \$15 billion defence spending to other countries. "There is a growing belief in Saudi Arabia

that at present it makes no military, strategic, or tactical sense," said a source with first-hand knowledge of Saudi opinion.

Political pressure to address Britain's relations with Saudi Arabia is also mounting on the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. In 1994 he called for a public inquiry into Al Yamamah following allegations that Mark Thatcher had received millions in commissions.

An early-day motion signed by 38 MPs, including the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, Clive Soley, is now calling for a National Audit Office report on the deal.

Mr Cook has signally failed to include Saudi Arabia in his ethical foreign policy remarks, despite a report from the parliamentary human rights group last month which detailed allegations of abuse, including torture, in the kingdom.

Since coming to power, Labour has adopted an ambiguous response in answer to MPs' questions on Al Yamamah commissions. John Spellar, the defence minister, repeated last year that the Government had not employed agents or paid commissions. He said: "Any use of agents by companies associated with Al Yamamah is a matter for those companies, but British Aerospace has assured us that it operates in accordance with laws and regulations of Saudi Arabia."

But the Guardian has learnt that British companies seeking to do business in Saudi Arabia are advised by the Department of Trade and Industry that under a 1978 Royal Decree agents are "not permitted in armaments contracts and related services". Where agents are appointed for all other public sector contracts — their fees must not exceed 5 per cent.

According to a senior DTI source commissions vary between 2 per cent and 10 per cent. "But people will get what they can," he added. In the past two years evidence has come to light about commissions of between 15 and 26 per cent paid by a number of Al Yamamah subcontractors, including Vosper Thornycroft, Royal Ordnance and Thorn-EMI. Now that Rolls Royce has joined the list it is only a matter of time before BAe's own role starts tumbling out.

The Al Ibrahims are part of an inner circle of princes and associates who have benefited from Al Yamamah to the tune of at least £2 billion. A spokesman for Rolls Royce said yesterday: "The writ will be defended."

Spin doctors furious over coverage of maverick's swipe at Blair, women MPs and millennium dome

Labour flays 'trivial' BBC

Kamal Ahmed
and Anne Perkins

THE BBC's relationship with the Government took a fresh nose-dive yesterday when the Labour Party described Radio 4's World at One programme as trivial and lacking perspective.

In a terse statement, a spokesman said that the programme's coverage of a speech by the Labour MP Brian Sedgmore, in which the veteran backbencher attacked Tony Blair as "above the law" and Labour's women MPs as "Sheffield wives", was typical of a corporation driven by news editors who simply wanted to attack the Government.

The World at One devoted 13 minutes of its 40-minute

programme to Mr Sedgmore's speech at the Tate Gallery in London, which was circulated to political correspondents on Thursday night to make sure it would not be missed.

As well as attacking the Prime Minister, Mr Sedgmore, a maverick who was one of the 47 Labour MPs who voted against the cut in benefits for lone parents, also turned his fire on Peter Mandelson, the Minister Without Portfolio.

He described the Millennium Dome as "Mandy's Folly", which at a staggering cost of £550 million will give the country the Secret Police's "Sheffield wives", was typical of a corporation driven by news editors who simply wanted to attack the Government.

A Labour Party spokesman described the speech as a silly stunt from a man who was "permanently out of line with the party".

A later statement then took up the attack on the BBC's coverage.

"For the BBC to think that this is the most important thing to happen today and devote 13 minutes of radio time to it demonstrates their complete loss of perspective and their increasingly trivial agenda which we have come to expect," an official said.

The latest row comes after a series of public battles between the Government and the BBC.

On Wednesday Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, rebuked one of the corporation's most senior political staff for raising the issue of Monica Lewinsky during Mr Blair's visit to America.

John Sergeant, the BBC's chief political correspondent, asked Mr Campbell if Mr Blair was worried that he might be questioned about the sexual scandal surrounding the American President, Bill Clinton.

Mr Campbell dismissed Mr Sergeant's question as "irrelevant" and attacked the BBC as a "downmarket, dumbed-down, over-stuffed, over-bureaucratic, ridiculous organisation".

Last month Mr Campbell and Gregor McKay, William Hague's spokesman, criticised BBC news at a seminar organised by the corporation's chief executive of news, Tony Hall.

In December the Labour Party threatened to suspend co-operation with the BBC after John Humphrys, a presenter of the Today programme, clashed with Harriet

Harmann, the social security secretary, on air.

"Why don't they concentrate on the bigger issues?" a government source asked.

The BBC hit back at its critics, saying that it was its job to scrutinise government policy.

"They are ridiculous," a senior news executive said.

"They want to control what we do. Mr Sedgmore's speech was not made in a vacuum and many others are sympathetic to what Mr Sedgmore was saying."

"The Labour Party put up Gerald Kaufman, who gave a vigorous defence of the party for 3½ minutes. It was perfectly balanced."

● Sir Julian Critchley, the rebel Tory who retired at the last election renewed his attack on the party yesterday, describing it as "anti-black and unattractive".

Sir Julian, former MP for Aldershot and biographer of Michael Heseltine, told The Oldie magazine that he preferred Tony Blair to William Hague.

He said: "The Tory party shows every sign of becoming a right-wing rumour, obscurantist and nationalist. They are certainly anti-black. By and large, most of them are so unattractive I wonder that I stayed with them as long as I did."

He praised Tony Blair: "He has dragged the Labour Party kicking and screaming into the last part of the 20th century... and that is no mean achievement."

A Conservative Central Office spokesman said last night: "Sir Julian is sometimes entertaining but never enlightening. I'm surprised that anyone takes anything he says seriously."



Mel Rees (left) who is to take command of the coastal patrol vessel HMS Express, and Sue Moore (right) who will assume control of HMS Dasher which is based at Portsmouth

Women to command Navy warships

Owen Bowcott

CENTURIES of male supremacy at sea will be scuffed next month when Lieutenant Sue Moore and Lieutenant Melanie Rees become the first women to assume command of a Royal Navy warship.

The officers, both aged 35, will each take charge of a fast patrol boat when they have completed a five week leadership course at a land base, HMS Dryad, in Hampshire.

The announcement of the appointments by John Reid, the Armed Forces Minister, was welcomed yesterday by equal opportunities campaigners who have pressed for women to be given greater responsibility.

"These appointments clearly demonstrate the Royal Navy's commitment to full integration of women wherever possible and the ability to pursue the same career opportunities as their male counterparts," Dr Reid said.

"Their selection has been by merit in direct competition with all officers of the same seniority and specialisation."

The Equal Opportunities Commission applauded the development. "These appointments send a great message to all young people with aspirations of joining the armed forces, and hopefully signals a fresh, modern era in terms of the opportunities open to both sexes," said Kamlesh Bahl, the commission's chairwoman.

The appointments were made by Rear Admiral Peter Franklyn, based in Portsmouth. Each of the 21 metre

long Archer class patrol vessels have a full complement of 12 and a maximum speed of 22 knots. They are normally used to introduce university students to life in the Navy. In wartime the patrol boats would be fitted with a 20mm bow gun and two more machine guns mounted on the flying bridge.

La Moore, from Bath, will take command of HMS Dasher, based in Portsmouth and used by Bristol University's Royal Naval Unit. She joined the service in 1992 and qualified as a navigator in

1996. She has served on HMS Sheffield and HMS Chatham. Lt Rees, who graduated from the University of Wales, will take command of HMS Express, the coastal patrol vessel at Penarth, near Cardiff.

It is used by students from Cardiff University. She joined the Royal Navy in January 1993 and has served on HMS Shetland and HMS Brave.

Yesterday the Ministry of Defence declined to allow the officers to be interviewed. A spokesman said: "We are trying to protect them."

Lieutenant Alex Bark who commands HMS Dasher and the Bristol University Royal Naval Unit, said: "This was my first command and it's a terrific job."

He added: "Sue Moore and Melanie Rees will find their new posts are the most satisfying and rewarding jobs they have done in the Navy."

"They may not be the biggest boats but a command is a command, and the training ships do the job of frigates and destroyers when it comes to flying the flag for the Royal Navy abroad."

Old Bill of the secret service

John Ezard

BRITISH security services posted the most popularly adored and subversive cartoonist of the first world war, Bruce Bairnsfather, to a "black intelligence" role aimed at deceiving some of his millions of admirers.

This grandiose strategy is revealed in his army file, made public earlier this week after 82 years of secrecy. The plan was for him to slip officially written propaganda opinions into replies to his host of private fan letters.

"We should get a chance of instilling our views into all sorts of people," an official enthused on his file in September, 1918. "Once started, this propaganda by private letter may develop into a big concern."

Another officer must be appointed to "supervise" the cartoonist, the official added.

Bairnsfather, aged 38, an officer who was then on injury leave, had just become a hero throughout the British Empire for his cartoon character, Old Bill — an untidy, outspoken trench soldier.

The most celebrated cartoon shows Bill riposting to a comrade in a heavily bombarded shell crater: "If I knew of a better 'ole, go to it."

The character aroused acute official alarm. "Nothing so quickly lowers morale as slovenliness," one critic wrote. "Yet here we have an army officer who invariably depicts his men as the very type which the army is anxious to suppress."

Defending himself, Bairnsfather wrote: "I love these old, work-wearing, tricky, self-contained slacker. If you were lying wounded in the middle of a barrage, the same man would come and pull you out."

Today, mass-produced jug figures of Old Bill fetch £50 on the antiques market. Scholars knew that in December 1918 Bairnsfather was

suddenly posted to the unusual job of "officer-cartoonist" at the War Office. This was three months after the note was added to his file. Now the Public Record Office, by revealing the file, has disclosed the thinking behind his appointment. "I had no knowledge of this," his biographer, Toni Holt, said yesterday.

However, the intelligence strategy apparently ended in disappointment and near-farce. As soon as he took the job, Bairnsfather was deluged with requests to go on celebrity tours and to appear on the radio. He was also asked to write books and sketches for wartime entertainments in London.

"I can't see how he would have had the time to write this," Holt said yesterday. "He was asked to write books and sketches for wartime entertainments in London."

"I can't see how he would have had the time to write this," Holt said yesterday. "He was asked to write books and sketches for wartime entertainments in London."

During industrial unrest after the war intelligence made a further determined effort to exploit him. The head of naval intelligence, Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, helped finance a West End play called Old Bill, MP, in which Bairnsfather's character was a miner.

Opening with his fellow-miners singing The Red Flag, this showed Old Bill converting them to safer beliefs by getting elected to the Commons. However, when the play was previewed in Glasgow, audiences disrupted it by joining in the Communist anthem. In London's West End it ran only seven months. In peacetime Bairnsfather's popularity declined and he went bankrupt. He died in 1959, aged 71.

Major Holt — whose biography The Better 'Ole (Milestone Publications) was published in 1985 — said the newly disclosed papers "give us insight into how deliberately the intelligence services tried to control ideas and images. They even did this with postcards."

"But Bairnsfather was a man who always played things straight down the line. Whatever letters he may have found time to write, he found a way of keeping his integrity."

Breakfast battle gives radio boost

Kamal Ahmed
Media Correspondent

THE TIDAL wave of publicity created by the breakfast news battle between Chris Evans and Zoe Ball has brought nearly a million listeners back to radio.

Both Evans's breakfast show on Virgin Radio, which he bought last year, and Ball's programme for Radio 1 saw large increases in listeners.

Figures released yesterday by Radio Joint Audience Research Ltd (Rajar), the body which oversees listening figures, show that Evans has added more than 650,000 listeners to the programme since he took over in October. He now has an audience of 2.3 million.

At the same time Ball's show, which she co-presents with Kevin Greening, has added 400,000 listeners, taking

its total to 5.5 million. "It's been good news across the board," said Matthew Bannister, director of BBC Radio and controller of Radio 1.

"With all the publicity over the Radio 4 changes, over the takeover at Virgin Radio, people have realised that radio is a vibrant and sexy medium and that is great for us all, both the BBC and commercial radio."

Although Radio 1 has had good recent figures its reach, the number of people who tune into a station each week, has fallen to 10.9 million from 12.2 million during the same period last year.

There are also problems at Radio 4 which has seen its reach fall from 8.3 million to 8.1 million in the same period. "I think a steady 8 million listeners for such a unique service is a good performance for Radio 4 and when the

schedule is relaunched in the spring it will improve that," Mr Bannister said. Both Radio 2 and Radio 3 achieved increases in the size of their audience over the past three months.

The new honeymoon for radio has been applauded by media executives at a time when television has been struggling to hang on to viewers.

After a slump in listening last summer, particularly during the aftermath of the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales, when people turned to newspapers and television, radio managers are breathing a sigh of relief that the public has rediscovered radio.

"This is great opportunity for us all to build up the medium and show what radio can really do," said Paul Robinson, managing director of Talk Radio, which increased its weekly audience by

200,000. The station has recently hired Kirsty Young to present its breakfast show which has 820,000 listeners. Chris Tarrant's morning programme on Capital Radio in London has also seen rapid growth, with an extra 300,000 listeners.

With 2 million tuning in, Tarrant is the most listened to radio presenter in London. Despite the good news, Evans could not help a dig at his Radio 1 rivals in his morning show yesterday.

"Radio 1 in the first month of the new breakfast show put on 750,000 listeners," he said. "Over the three months, because the first month was so good, they've shown a gain. 'Actually, their figures are going down, that's the truth,' he claimed."

"With what we've done in October, November, December and January, our figures keep on going up."

Soldier shot dead during army exercise in Wales

Janine Wilson

MORE than 50 soldiers were being questioned yesterday by police and military investigators after a soldier was shot dead during a night exercise in Wales.

Richard King, aged 22, from Kent, a Grenadier Guard, was killed by a single shot during an "escape and evasion" exercise at the Sennybridge ranges near Brecon. Initially police and military investigators treated the death as suspicious but later confirmed it had been an accident.

Mr King, who was based near Windsor, was found by a fellow soldier collapsed during the early hours of Thursday. He was taken to hospital by ambulance from the military range but was found to be dead on arrival.

At first it was thought he may have collapsed as a result of being involved in an accident when the Land-Rover he was travelling in skidded on black ice and plunged into a gully. It was not until his body was examined by doctors that the wound was discovered. A post mortem at Nevill Hall hospital, Aberystwyth, showed that the injury was caused by a bullet from a standard issue army rifle. The "escape and evasion" operation was one of several the unit was involved in on the week-long manoeuvres at the army ranges.

Dyled-Powys CID chief Detective Chief Superintendent Jeff Thomas said yesterday: "We are now satisfied that the soldier's death was an accident, but our inquiries are continuing to find out the exact circumstances of the incident."

"A file will be submitted to the coroner, and, depending on our findings, to the Crown Prosecution Service. We will be attempting to find what degree of negligence, if any, was involved."

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Polish women awake from silent suffering

The abused are starting to lose the habit of submission, writes Neil Bowdler in Warsaw

BARBARA would sometimes stand by as her son-in-law beat her daughter Ewa senseless. When she found the 18-year-old with her eyes bloodied, her body swollen and the sheets blood-splattered, she would simply say to her: "Why don't you change the bed linen?"

Barbara, aged 46, chose to believe her son-in-law's account that Ewa was mentally ill, with sado-masochistic tendencies.

She believed him the day Ewa escaped to a gynaecologist and her husband punished her by calmly cutting off her toe in a secluded wood and neatly sewed it back on with fishing line.

In front of the police, in front of doctors, Barbara would testify against her daughter, and help send her back to her husband whenever she escaped.

Barbara sought refuge from her own husband, but she says: "A wife's role was to listen to her husband's will — everyone said that."

His vodka bouts, punches and kicks led on to rape, strangulation, attempts to suffocate her with a pillow, and threats to throw her from their eighth-floor balcony or kill her and her children with a kitchen knife.

Yet she went on dutifully as the perfect Polish wife and mother, sure she would receive little support from friends and colleagues.

Not until 1993, 12 years after the violence began, and after her husband kicked her so hard he fractured her spine and nearly paralysed her, did she decide to file criminal charges and start divorce proceedings.

"It's a terribly long time, too long," she says. "I tried to

hide it from the world, to make a family."

The cases of Ewa and Barbara would, like so many others, have gone unnoticed were it not for their unprecedented step, in this conservative Catholic society, of bravely publicising and speaking out at tribunals on domestic violence organised by a Warsaw support group, the Centre for Women's Rights.

The first tribunal was held

just over two years ago. The centre's chief, Urszula Nowakowska, believes they have helped drive into the public domain an issue which was for many years considered strictly a private and family matter.

More than 40 years of communism during which all social ills were glossed over has undoubtedly played a part, as no doubt has subsidised vodka prices. But the

roots are deeper in a country in which female martyrdom is a tradition and the family has an almost mythological status.

The clergy may be eager to play a positive role, says Ms Nowakowska, but there are too many stories like that of the woman shouted out of a Warsaw church for announcing during confession that she intended to leave her violent husband.

"The Polish mother must suffer for her country ... if she has a cross to bear, she must carry it in silence."

But the victims are now speaking out and the domestic media is listening, a debate perhaps stirred by the country's first national hotline for victims, the Blue Line. In recent weeks, too, there has been a national awareness campaign, which has confronted Poles with

graphic billboard-size images of victims.

Marta Ziemska, who runs the hotline, thinks the campaign has provoked the better husbands have called in asking for an end to this "meddling" in their private affairs.

She says Polish society is still 20 years behind the West in confronting these issues, and is only now beginning to see the kind of educational

and penal reforms introduced there in the 1970s. So, seriously addressing child sex abuse in families seems a pipe-dream.

Support groups now face the challenges posed by the Solidarity-led government, which is committed to traditional Catholic family values. It has replaced the departments for women and children with an Office for Family Affairs, which is headed by an arch-conservative.



Poland's first campaign to highlight domestic violence includes the Blue Line, a hotline for victims, and billboard posters like this, which reads 'Because the soup was too salty'

Cypriot leader eyes youth vote

Elections on the divided island look set to return to power President Clerides, whose tough military policies are proving popular. Helena Smith reports from Nicosia

CYPRUS'S septuagenarian president, Glafcos Clerides, is relying on the youth vote to return him to power in a two-round election beginning tomorrow, as the divided island prepares for its most critical year since the 1974 Turkish invasion.

As a heated campaign wound down, opinion polls predicted that most of the 17,000 "virgin voters" would back Mr Clerides in a display of support for his tough military policies.

This is the first time that 18-year-olds have been given the vote since the former Brit-

ish colony won independence 30 years ago.

Mr Clerides is running a close race against George Papadou, a communist-backed independent and former foreign minister. The youth vote is expected to be decisive in a ballot that is unlikely to yield a clear winner until the second round on February 15.

The former wartime RAF pilot and prisoner of war might seem an odd choice of leader for teenagers. Of the five main candidates Mr Clerides is, at 78, by far the oldest, but the veteran conservative has had to do little to woo their support.

"Younger people are attracted to the policy of putting up a harder resistance and not accepting defeat so easily," said Nicos Parthenis, a sociologist. "Clerides is seen as a politician who is trying to do something."

Richard Holbrooke, President Clinton's high-profile emissary, and other mediators, such as Britain's Sir David Hannay, agree that 1998 will be the make-or-break year.

In an election dominated by defence and relations with the Turkish-occupied north of the island, the most worrying factor is what action the Turks will take if the 40 Russian anti-aircraft missiles ordered by Mr Clerides ever arrive.

Ankara has vowed to destroy the weapons if Turkish air superiority is threatened. The promise of the weapons, and the creation of

a controversial common defence pact with Greece, have proved two of Mr Clerides's most popular moves.

The breakdown of intercommunal talks last summer and Turkey's fury at what it sees as a Greek-orchestrated rejection of its application to join the European Union have increased the fear of a big confrontation between Greece and Turkey over the island.

Yesterday a Western diplomat said the worst scenario, now being studied, foresaw the intercommunal talks not restarting, the missiles arriving, Turkey destroying them, the Greek Cypriots countering by striking the Turkish-occupied north, the Turkish Cypriots responding with an attack on the south, and the EU postponing the island's accession talks.

Greece, in turn, might carry out its threat to block next year's accession talks for

the five eastern bloc states scheduled to join the EU, while Turkey would do the same with NATO's expansion eastwards.

"It's a very frightening scenario, but yes, it could go on and on just like that," the diplomat said. "It was hoped here that the missiles would draw international attention to the Cyprus problem. Instead, they have become a potentially explosive element."

Hopes for a settlement rest on next month's attempts by international heavyweights like Mr Holbrooke to restart the United Nations-sponsored peace talks. The talks will play a vital role in getting the Turkish Cypriots to join the island's EU membership negotiations this spring.

Whoever wins the election will have to pull off a skilful balancing act if Europe's most intractable dispute is ever to be resolved.

'Rakyeta', the final frontier in word-shy space travel

James Meek in Moscow

YOU say "rocket" and I say "rakyeta". You say "spacesuit" and I say "skafandr". America and Russia aren't calling the whole thing off yet. But the arrival at the Baikonur cosmodrome this week of the first element of the new International Space Station (ISS) marks the beginning of the end for the ascendancy of the Russian language in the cosmos.

The first ISS crew, due to blast off later this year, will have two Russians and one Westerner — the US astronaut Bill Shepherd — and they will be obliged to speak in English: a relief to linguistically-challenged US astronauts and a blow to

the intricate lexicon of the Russian space programme.

US astronauts on Mir have repeatedly complained of loneliness on the Russian space station because of language problems. Their technical vocabulary may be fine, but they falter with the banter.

Despite the new regime, Americans like the shuttle commander Terry Wilcutt know that a monolingual astronaut could run into trouble if his colleagues formed an exclusive clique.

"I intend to take Russian as soon as we finish the debriefs," Mr Wilcutt said. "When you speak the same language you can share jokes, laughs, ... and that's very, very important."

Andy Thomas, Mir's current US astronaut, angered

Russian journalists when he tried to answer their questions in English, and his predecessor David Wolf said he found it hard to bond with the Russian crew.

But cosmonauts tend not to criticise their foreign partners and it may be that personality is the real barrier.

Michael Foale, on board the ailing Mir last year, built up a deep rapport with his Russian colleagues, Vasily Tsibilyev and Alexander Lazutkin. He did simultaneous Russian translations of his videotapes. Sitting in their damaged spacecraft, they would watch films like *Total Recall* — in which Arnold Schwarzenegger almost dies from lack of oxygen on Mars.

President responds to his critics

Mandela talks of his success

David Bornstein in Johannesburg

NELSON MANDELA answered his critics yesterday with an up-beat speech depicting South Africa as a country finally getting to grips with the legacy of apartheid.

Opening parliament for the last time before he retires from the presidency, he avoided the racial rhetoric which has drawn criticism in recent months. He also extended an olive branch to the press, congratulating newspapers which "uncovered the soundbites ... who prey on the public purse".

At the end of a week in which his reputation took its worst battering since he was released from prison, Mr Mandela told parliament in Cape Town that his government should be judged by its success or failure in improving the lives of "the most vulnerable sections of society".

South Africa was now a "clean and accessible water" to 1.3 million more South Africans; 500 clinics; and more than 400,000 electricity connections last year meant that 50 per cent of South Africa was now electrified. "Impressive" progress had been made in land redistribution, while changes to land tenure laws would bring more security to more than 6 million people. He added that there would be almost 500,000 telephone connections this year.

He conceded that the gov-

ernment had not met its target of 1,000 houses being started or completed every two-and-a-half days.

He insisted that there had been a "marked" reduction in serious crime since the ANC came to power in 1994.

He touched on the race issue only to defend controversial legislation for "employment equity", enforcing affirmative action, which is due to come before parliament this year.

"We shall not be discouraged by the sirens of self-interest that are being sounded in defence of privilege, and the insults that equate women, Africans, Indians, Coloureds and the disabled with a lowering of standards," he said.

"As we have said before, affirmative action is corrective action. There is no other way of moving away from racial discrimination to true equality."

In foreign affairs, Mr Mandela said the country had underlined its commitment to Africa. Exports to African states had increased by 70 per cent since 1995 and imports had risen by 60 per cent.

Asia had become South Africa's second largest continental trading partner; the country was starting to exploit the "huge potential" of Latin America; and it had established a "strategic relationship" with China.

South Africans had "rolled up their sleeves to build a society that cares", he said. "The foundation has been laid and the building has begun."

Mr Mandela is likely to appear next month before a high court judge hearing an application by the South African Rugby Union to set aside the appointment of an inquiry into administration of the sport. The judge's decision to call the president — to justify an executive decision under oath — has raised eyebrows.

Mr Mandela is expected to



Mandela takes the salute at parliament's opening yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: SASA KRALJ

Earthquake 'kills thousands'

Raja Aaghar in Islamabad

THOUSANDS of people have been killed by a severe earthquake in remote northern Afghanistan, according to opposition and Taliban government sources.

The government in Kabul said last night that 3,230 were killed by the quake the opposition-ruled Takhar province on Wednesday.

Earlier press reports from Pakistan quoted sources in the opposition alliance as saying that at least 3,800 had died. Opposition sources said 15,000 were homeless.

The United Nations, which represents the government of the ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, said more than 4,000 bodies had been recovered.

The ambassador, Ravan Farhadi, said the information about the casualties came from telephone calls from the authorities in Taloqan, in Takhar, who said the earthquake was centred on the city of Rustaq and had destroyed more than 20 villages.

The region affected is in the grip of a bitter winter. Its few roads have been badly damaged by the civil war.

A Swedish seismologist,

quake measured 6.1 on the Richter scale, but a Pakistani centre measured it at 5.8.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said it had sent a team from Dushanbe in Tajikistan to assess the damage.

Its spokesman, Jon Valtells, said he could not confirm that the death toll ran into thousands.

"We have nothing to confirm that it is a very, very high figure for an earthquake in a sparsely-populated area," he said. "We hope it is not true."

Another spokesman for the

major quake in Kobe, Japan, in January 1995 claimed 6,430 lives. "That was a built-up area, whereas this is a sparsely-populated one. We regard this with great suspicion."

Taliban ordered its forces to halt military operations in Takhar.

Afghanistan's ambassador to the United Nations in New York, said more than 4,000 bodies had been recovered.

Mr Farhadi represents the government of ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, which fled from the capital, Kabul, when it was seized by the Taliban forces in September 1996.

News in brief

Court upholds deal with tobacco firms

A JUDGE in Florida yesterday upheld the \$349 million settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by flight attendants against cigarette manufacturers, a court spokesman said.

The attorneys had alleged that the tobacco companies knew of the dangers to non-smokers of cigarette smoke and hid the health risks from them and other Americans.

Under the settlement, reached in October, the cigarette makers agreed to pay \$300 million to create a research foundation and \$49 million in legal fees and costs. None of the money went to the flight attendants. Their lawyers opposed the settlement, saying it limited the industry's liability. — Reuters, Miami.

Protesters board nuclear ship

GREENPEACE activists boarded a freighter carrying nuclear material through the Panama Canal yesterday and chained themselves to its mast, officials and witnesses said. The Pacific Swan, operated by British Nuclear Fuels, is carrying 24 tonnes of reprocessed nuclear waste from France to Japan, the third and the largest such load to be shipped from Europe.

Three Greenpeace activists — a Belgian and a Swiss man, and a Chilean woman — boarded the ship under cover of darkness, and the crew apparently mistook them for security guards. They unfurled a banner saying "Stop plutonium". It took three hours to remove them. — Reuters, Panama Canal.

Okinawa stumps Hashimoto

OKINAWA'S governor embarrassed the Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, yesterday by declaring his opposition to plans for a United States floating military heliport in the island prefecture. Masahide Ota told a press conference he was reflecting the views of local people.

Under an agreement signed in 1996 the offshore heliport would replace a US marines air base in the south of the main island, easing the military burden on Okinawa. But Mr Ota has effectively killed the plan because Mr Hashimoto has promised to respect the wishes of Okinawans. — Jonathan Watts, Tokyo.

US: Cable car plane too low

THE US military acknowledged yesterday that the plane which caused the cable car disaster in the Dolomites on Tuesday in which 20 people were killed was flying far too low.

At a news conference at the US air base at Aviano in northern Italy, Brigadier-General Guy Vander Linden said the plane was unacceptably close to the ground. "The point of impact is well below the approved minimum altitude," he said.

But he denied local media reports that the plane had strayed far from its flight path. The admission came as investigating Italian magistrates complained that they had been deceived about whether the EA-6B surveillance plane was fitted with a black box flight recorder. — Reuters, Rome.

Teacher jailed for school affair

A SCHOOLTEACHER who had a baby by a 13-year-old pupil has been jailed for seven years and five months. The pair were found together in the early hours of the morning in a parked car, breaking the terms of a probation order. Sentencing 35-year-old Mary Kay LeTourneau in Seattle, Judge Linda Lau said she had "purposely squandered" an opportunity of rehabilitation.

Police believe the pair were planning to flee the country. — Christopher Reed, Los Angeles.

ships

Dead during ice in Wales

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 most of the world supported US calls for air strikes. This time round there are fewer takers, with only Britain and Israel supporting the hard line. Most other countries have deserted to the middle path of peaceful persuasion, writes **Julian Borger**

Gulf battle lines blurred

AS TOP diplomats from the United States and Britain toured the world this week in search of support for air strikes against Iraq, they discovered a Gulf coalition of sorts still exists. But is no longer on their side.

France's foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, drew attention to this reversal of fortunes, arguing that Washington and London, not Baghdad, were isolated. With no one outside the United States, Britain and Israel backing air strikes, Tony Blair conceded in Washington yesterday that there were "varying degrees of enthusiasm for the military option".

The former Gulf war partners have not gone over to Saddam Hussein but they have deserted to the middle path of peaceful persuasion, denouncing both sides.

For all the thousands of air miles and smiling handshakes notched up by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and his US counterpart, Madeleine Albright, neither has won over officers of troops or equipment. At best, they have secured consent — overt or tacit — to use some of the region's airbases as a last resort.

Only Israel has offered enthusiastic support for bombing raids and, given the dire state of the Middle East peace process, that is support the transatlantic partners would rather do without.

The US defence secretary, William Cohen, urged Israel not to respond in the event of an Iraqi missile attack, but

the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has made it clear that his country will not show the restraint it did in 1991, when 39 Iraqi Scud missiles fell on the Jewish state.

President Clinton's perceived failure to put pressure on Mr Netanyahu's rightwing government has arguably been the biggest nail in the old coalition's coffin.

There are other salient differences from the days of the Gulf coalition. This time President Saddam is accused of bending the rules, not invading a neighbouring state.

The battle lines have been further blurred by a groundswell of sympathy for Iraqi civilians, who have taken the brunt of more than seven years of United Nations sanctions. President Saddam is attempting to defuse regional tension still further by ordering the release of non-Iraqi Arab prisoners.

Long before the current stand-off, France, Russia and China argued against sanc-

tions on grounds of morality and economic self-interest.

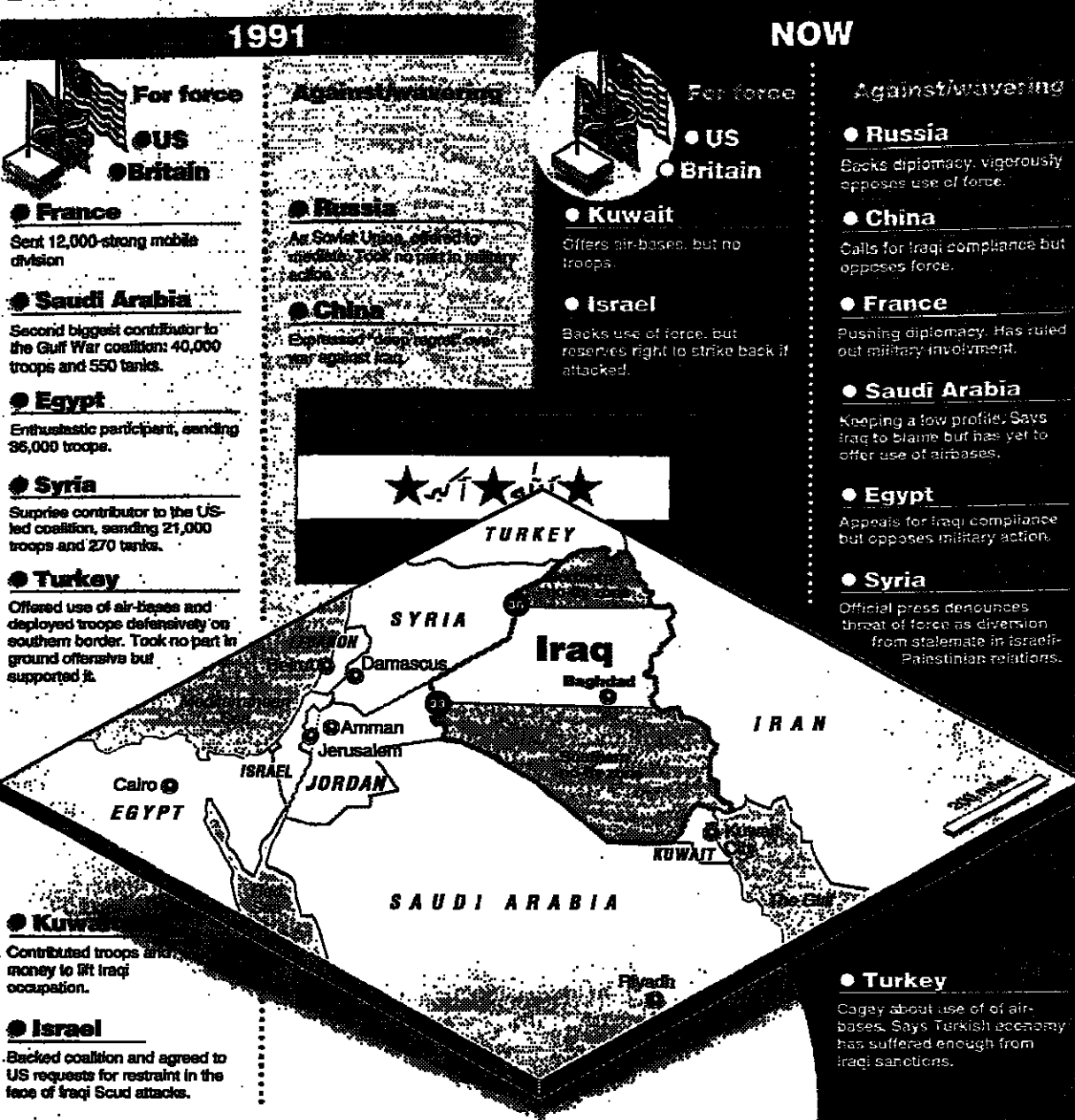
France, which contributed ships, helicopters and 12,000 personnel to the 1991 crusade, rules out any role in future air strikes while insisting that a diplomatic solution is in the offing.

In 1991 the Soviet Union was struggling to survive and offered last-minute mediation, which was brushed aside with disdain by President George Bush. This time Moscow's close links with Baghdad have allowed it to lead the diplomatic counterpoint to threats of violence.

In the Gulf itself, the ring of steel around Iraq has long since rusted. In 1991 Saudi Arabia provided the second biggest armed contingent in the coalition, with 40,000 troops and 550 tanks. On this occasion, Riyadh has so far refused to allow its airbases to be used for air strikes.

On Thursday Mr Cook was happy to cox a statement from Riyadh blaming Iraq for

Altered States



the "dire consequences" that would result from diplomatic failure.

Egypt — another big troop contributor seven years ago — offered a similar form of words but no material backing for a military exercise.

Syria, which dispatched 21,000 troops at the last moment in 1991, has rebuilt its ties with Baghdad and now

leads the region's rhetorical opposition to air strikes.

Iran, in the 1980s Iraq's bitterest foe, stood cheerfully on the sidelines during the Kuwait war but is now more vocally fearful of the "imperialist" projection of US military might.

Jordan is the only Arab country where support for the US position has actually

grown since the Gulf war. Then, King Hussein was virtually alone in offering the

Western diplomats believe the Turks will reluctantly allow US and British bombers to use Incirlik, but only at the last moment when it is certain all diplomatic avenues have been explored. The diplomats also predict that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain may fall into line at the eleventh hour.

Until then the military planners will have to focus on sorties from four aircraft carriers in the Gulf, and the British Indian Ocean island base of Diego Garcia, a potential launching pad for B-52 bombers.

The heaviest cost of trying to "go it alone" militarily will probably only become evident once the bombs have dropped and the shock wave begins to travel across a disillusioned and resentful Middle East.

Martin Woolfscott, page 8;

Should we go to war? The

Week, page 16

Limping wolf still haunts Kuwait

Ian Black in Kuwait

IN KUWAIT'S luxury hotels, armchair strategists are plotting the downfall of Saddam Hussein, hoping he has finally dug his own grave in the weapons inspection crisis.

The talk is not of a new attack on the emirate — the military might of the United States will prevent that — but whether this time the Iraqi leader will be overthrown.

"If they can just hit the Republican Guard hard around Baghdad, that's all it will take," enthused a man in conventional white robe and head dress.

But others were not so confident. "We don't believe the Americans are serious this time," a local journalist said. "They've done this before — raised the temperature and then done nothing."

Kuwait's armed forces have gone on higher alert in the past few days, and the civil defence council has met twice to review the protection of the 2.15 million population. But there is no sense of urgency or tangible threat.

Some complain that their government is too passive.

"Kuwaitis see the Israeli government giving gas masks to all its citizens. Why aren't the authorities here doing the same?" asked one man.

Baghdad is debilitated by sanctions and is nothing like the threat it was seven years ago. But it is still seen as dangerous and untrustworthy.

"We are very worried because we are the ones living next door to the wolf," said Ahmed, a businessman.

Vengeance remains a powerful motive. Ahmed was imprisoned for three months, and his niece and nephew are among the 600 Kuwaitis still missing or imprisoned.

President Saddam poses his tiny neighbour a curious dilemma. "Kuwaitis don't feel directly threatened as long as he is in power, because they have the American defence umbrella," said a foreign diplomat. "But if he fell, there might be less interest in protecting [Kuwait]. For them Iraq is a permanent neighbour and they need a permanent and watertight solution."

US and Britain shoulder to shoulder and 'prepared to act'

THE United States and Britain "stand together" in the Iraq weapons inspections crisis.

President Bill Clinton said last night at a news conference with Tony Blair, writes **Ian Black**.

"The prime minister and I would both prefer a genuine diplomatic solution," he said, adding: "If Saddam does not comply with the

unanimous will of the international community, we must be prepared to act, and we are."

The US military presence in the Gulf has meanwhile grown with the arrival of a third aircraft carrier. Ships carrying 2,000 marines are also due in the area.

Britain said it was sending eight more Tornado bombers to Kuwait, and

helping Baghdad to pump more oil and China repeated its opposition to force.

Japan, host of the Nagano Winter Olympic Games, said it had called on Britain to observe an "Olympic truce".

Two US marine corps fighter jets collided over the Gulf yesterday but both pilots were rescued, US defence officials said.

As France proposed

helping Baghdad to pump more oil and China repeated its opposition to force.

Japan, host of the Nagano Winter Olympic Games, said it had called on Britain to observe an "Olympic truce".

ADVANCE PREVIEWS NATIONWIDE TOMORROW

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Behold the new Houdini

Blair learns from the master

PRESIDENT Clinton's Houdini act has now become the fastest show in town. The whole cycle — from initial bind to miraculous escape — used to take at least a few days, if not several weeks. Yesterday Mr Clinton performed the entire trick in a matter of hours. Over breakfast Americans read that the president had pressured his personal secretary to support his version of the Monica Lewinsky affair, effectively coaching her as a witness in time for her appearance before the Grand Jury. According to the New York Times, Betty Currie told investigators that Mr Clinton summoned her last month to the White House for a special weekend session — where he "led her through" her testimony, making sure she did not contradict his account of events. The paper claimed the move failed and, feeling "deep anguish," Ms Currie told the Grand Jury that the president and Ms Lewinsky had indeed been alone in the White House — despite Mr Clinton's claims to the contrary. This is a serious charge. If the Times account is accurate, and the president urged his secretary to lie under oath, then he would be guilty of "subornation of perjury" — sufficient grounds for impeachment. Moreover, the tactics of the last fortnight will not work. Betty Currie cannot be dismissed as a crackpot member of any "vast, right-wing conspiracy." She is a Clinton loyalist, so trusted she was the gatekeeper of the White House's innermost sanctum.

This, then, was the challenge that faced Bill Clinton yesterday morning. The new surge of scandal — adding Watergate-style legitimacy to the sleazy tales of stained dresses and White House kneepads — threatened to overshadow what should have been yesterday's lead Washington story: the love-in with Tony Blair. But then came the Houdini manoeuvre. The president strode into the East Room of the White House, Mr Blair at his side, for a joint news conference — and delivered yet another tour-de-force. His performance was so stellar it served as a good reminder not only why Bill Clinton was elected twice but how he managed to survive a nuclear-level scandal — and come out with his highest ever poll rating. When he was asked about resignation, he didn't stammer or lash out. He stood, eyes steady, voice mellifluous, and told how he had tried to change the rules. He wanted to depersonalise politics, to draw the venom from it. Others had done the opposite, but that didn't mean he was wrong. And then, the room hushed, he said: "I will never walk away from my responsibility to the American people." Like his State of the Union performance, Bill Clinton showed how a scandal-plagued leader can rise above the fray and make his accusers look small. Whether the magic will last forever is a different story. But Tony Blair should appreciate the masterclass he was treated to yesterday. If he brings nothing else back from Washington, the prime minister should stash a videotape of that performance in his hand-luggage. You never know when he might need it.

The cannabis casino

Labour should go Dutch

IS A new law decriminalising cannabis really necessary? Yesterday we published the first national statistics on how police and prosecutors in England and Wales are dealing with cannabis users. They provide clear evidence that in many parts of the country decriminalisation is already taking place. In the 10 years to 1995, while the number of people cautioned for possessing the drug increased tenfold — from 4,000 to 40,000 — the number prosecuted only doubled. Ten years ago there were almost three times as many prosecutions as cautions; now cautions are almost double the number of prosecutions.

These figures should surprise no-one. The police have always been ahead of politicians in dealing with drug cultures. Privately, many are sympathetic to the Dutch approach, which never legalised cannabis but decriminalised possession through the prosecution process. Courts have been equally sensible. A recent Home Office review of 103 courts found that in 90 only between 0 and 2.5 per cent of people prosecuted for possession were given a custodial sentence. So that's alright then? Far from it. The fact that we do not have a national policy on soft drugs creates arbitrary justice. Most police forces seek to divert young people caught with the drug from the criminal justice system, but not all. If a prosecution is pursued, most courts impose a fine, but not all. One court imposes prison sentences on up to 17 per cent of people charged with possession. This casino justice imprisons over 900 young people annually, creating great damage and severely eroding public confidence in the system. The sooner the Government adopts a national approach — preferably the Dutch — the better.

A Country Diary

MACHYNLETH. Now that we have got January out of the way, we can soon start looking forward to the first butterflies of spring. Here, in 1997, the first three were a small tortoise-shell on March 10, a peacock on the 22nd and a brimstone on the 30th. Looking back through my diaries, I find that these three have been amongst the first four years after year one, only occasionally beaten by the comma or the red admiral. Though I am not an ardent chaser after butterflies, I do delight in recording the few I see each year, their number not usually more than about two dozen, my last (and best) in 1997 being a silver-washed fritillary on August 24. Time was when, two other fritillaries — the pearl-bordered and the high brown — might be seen in this district, but not any more. Theories have been advanced to explain why these and others have declined. Such theories may or may not be wide of the mark but they ought to be put

to the test whenever possible. One comforting thought is that the conservation of Britain's butterflies is currently being promoted as never before by the project called Butterflies For The New Millennium. This is a five-year investigation covering 1995-1999, and the year 2000 will see the publication of an Atlas Of British Butterflies based on this survey. With two years' fieldwork still to be done, the promoters of the scheme are now signalling that, while much of the country has been well surveyed, there remain large areas of wilder Britain whose butterflies are still little known. So, if you'd like to go butterfly-mapping in some under-recorded region, your offer would, no doubt, be gratefully accepted. And even if you don't find many butterflies, you are sure to see some lovely places. For information, contact Richard Fox, ITC Monkswood, Abbots Ripton, Cambs PE17 2LS.

WILLIAM CONDRY

Letters to the Editor

Drama, drink and standards

FURTHER to your article concerning Michael Wearing and the BBC's drama serials output, ("Stiffed" BBC drama chief quits, February 6), may I set the record straight about the decision-making process on the Janet Neel adaptations? The decision not to proceed was entirely an editorial judgment made by the Controller of BBC1, Peter Salmon, in the context of the very strong range of drama titles on offer. No focus group research was undertaken to consider the project. Focus group research is never used in BBC Television as a deciding factor in any commissioning decision.

Alan Yentob,

Director of Television,

BBC Broadcast,

London W12 7RJ.

NOWHERE does your Leader (February 3) give so much as a thought to the thousands of country pubs which will disappear once police are allowed to prove our lanes arresting any driver who has drunk a pint and a half of bitter.

You also peddle the half-truth that drink-related deaths have stood at 640 for the last four years. Indeed they have, but they have done so against a 15 per cent increase in drivers, a "real" improvement of three or four per cent per year.

John Dodd,

Jenny Lake Row,

Petersfield GU3 9QD.

PETER Kingston's concern about the pressure on church schools to accommodate the rush of applicants (Education, February 3) is misplaced. Our concern should be for those state primary schools adversely affected.

Since the publication of the NAT results last week, my children's primary school (Church of England and 6th in the borough league tables) have received several calls from parents wishing to transfer their children to the school. Their previous schools were all under-achieving, according to national standards. The morale, as well as the finances, must surely suffer as they unexpectedly "lose" pupils mid-term.

V A Hall,

110 Green Walk,

Crayford, Kent DA1 4JL.

RECENTLY saw an advertisement for new cars that showed two cars on the same motorway. Is this a record?

Ron Bill,

59 Park Court,

Harlow, Essex CM20 2PZ.

Please include a full postal address and a telephone number. We may edit letters.

Press and private parts

HOW appalling that a Labour Lord Chancellor should be proposing yet another form of press censorship (Anger over Irvine's blunders, February 6). In addition to its threat to press freedom, Lord Irvine's approach is flawed because he simply assumes that there is a private realm and that Robin Cook's affairs fall into it. He is taking for granted that people's activities can be neatly categorised as either private or public.

It is surely false to suppose that a person can be divided into two separate halves, each of which can be considered on its own. If the press is to be subjected to prior restraint, this needs to be justified by much sounder analysis.

Andrew Belsey,

Centre for Applied Ethics,

University of Wales, Cardiff.

YOUR measured reaction to the Lord Chancellor's words on press and privacy (Leader, February 6) is a welcome contrast to the gross over-reaction by some others. As someone in the unusual po-

sition of being both a newspaper journalist by original profession and later a tabloid victim, I can well see both sides of the privacy-press freedom debate.

Precisely where the balance should lie is a serious issue which needs mature reflection. There are persuasive arguments that pull in different directions but are equally sincere.

Repeatedly chanting the mantra "freedom of the press" is not sufficiently persuasive to justify excessive intrusion into private lives with no restraint. In fact, the press has always accepted some restraints. For example, there are legal controls on racial matters and on court reporting, designed to protect individual rights.

It would not be unreasonable to argue that some aspects of personal privacy should be similarly protected. At present, the PCC is incapable of delivering on that and has no meaningful sanctions. Unless that is swiftly righted, the courts will undoubtedly fulfil their historic role and

redress the balance of power between the citizen and a seemingly over-mighty institution.

Piers Merchant,

(former Conservative MP),

176 Bromley Road,

Beckenham, Kent BR2 6PG.

IRRESPONSIBLE and macabre journalism is part of the price society pays for accountable government. In any event, there are enough laws in the books to deal with this phenomenon.

If the argument is that the process of seeking redress when this occurs is too expensive or prolonged, then the answer lies in a reform of the legal process, not in an advocacy of prior restraint, which has no place in the public discourse or constitutional government on the eve of the 21st century.

Moreover, the Cook case, embarrassing as it may have been to the Foreign Secretary and the ruling party, is a weak wicket on which to bat for the Lord Chancellor's point for what is wrong in asking searching questions about the

ethics of a foreign secretary, whose major policy initiative so far is advocacy for an ethical foreign policy?

Chidi Odinkalu,

124 Sandringham Road,

London E8 2RJ.

ANY proposal for a "privacy" law will in effect be a law to protect hypocrisy and double standards, and the exposure of such characteristics, especially in public figures, will always be in the public interest. Being a life-long advocate of free love and sexual freedom may prevent me from ever qualifying for a Cabinet post, but that is a small price to pay for the far more valuable knowledge and sense of self-worth of knowing that nobody can ever call me a hypocrite.

The establishment makes the laws and oversees the mores of society, so, if its members transgress without ever previously having made any effort to change these things, why shouldn't they be exposed?

Dave Godin,

2 Norwood Road,

Sheffield S6 7ED.

Iraq: waging war with propaganda

PERMIT me to express extreme scepticism about Iraq's alleged hidden stocks of weaponry (UN allies round on Clinton, February 6). At the time of the Gulf war in 1991, we were told that Iraq was on the threshold of becoming a nuclear power. Subsequent investigation of the Iraqi nuclear programme, reported in detail in Scientific American in 1995, revealed that Iraq had been at least 10 years away from making its first atom bomb.

Now we are told that Iraq has terrifying germ warfare capabilities, a fact curiously not reported to the Security Council by UN weapons inspectors. Prof D A Turner, University of Kent, Canterbury.

PRIOR to the 1991 Gulf war, the media recounted two reports which created great hostility towards Iraq. The first was about Iraq amassing troops and tanks on the Kuwait/Saudi border in preparation for attacking Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter. The second was about Iraqi soldiers seizing incubators from a Kuwaiti hospital and discarding the babies.

A few years later, both stories were proved to be untrue (The lies that made the Gulf war, December 16, 1995). However, the damage had already been done.

R Nadhmi,

118 Gowan Avenue,

London SW6 6RG.

AFEW days ago, a sophisticated all modern electronic equipment on a low-flying training exercise in the Italian Alps, cut the cable of a cable car and caused the death of 20 Italians (20 killed as jet slices cable car wires, February 4). It was a sunny day with clear skies and the pilot should have flown at over 2,000ft; he was, in fact, flying below 500ft. Are these the people we should trust to be able to fly over Iraq and precision bomb specific targets?

C G Singh,

16 Horsley Gardens,

Sunderland.

SIEGFRIED Sassoon's 1917 Spence manifesto of 1917 (Sassoon and the fight for sanity, February 3) is a timely reminder of the political errors and insincerities that can be used to justify war.

Why does our government continue to pretend that the US has produced any case at all for a military attack on Iraq? Martin Ecclestone,

Princess Royal Cottage,

Stroud, Glos GL5 3UA.



Dunroamin

I WAS distressed to read that the Government may break its promise to pass a "right to roam" law, and that Forestry Commission land is still being sold off (Report, February 4). In East Sussex, many private FC holdings are now private with walkers locked out. It seems trees need privacy to grow. How different things are in Sweden and Finland, where free access is enshrined in law

Crisis review

WHATEVER the inter-departmental dispute over the future of Britain's dependencies (Cook envisages Show, Short, February 5), government must not lose sight of the real inconsistencies between the treatment of particular dependencies, for example, the Falklands, Gibraltar and others, and the treatment in nationality terms of former colonies.

The review must go further than simply renaming dependent territories "overseas territories" and giving control to one Foreign Office minister. The communities in this country who have an interest in how dependencies and former colonies are treated, including, for example, East African Asians and Caribbean communities, feel that the review currently being undertaken is too reactive to Montserrat's crisis and must be more credible and comprehensive.

Claude Moraes,

Director, Joint Council for the

Welfare of Immigrants,

115 Old Street,

London EC1V 9JR.

Our friends from the town hall

JONATHAN Freedland relies too heavily on Our Friends In The North for his views of local government (Britain's problem with corruption, February 4). The Nolan Committee, for example, reported that standards of conduct in local government by both members and officers were high.

Of course, there is no place for councillors or officials who abuse their office. Where this has occurred, the Labour Party has been quick to condemn misconduct and discipline any members involved. Mr Freedland has apparently failed to notice the most serious case of abuse recorded in local government: the corrupt under-achiever Shirley Porter, nor the deafening silence from the Conservatives.

Corruption by public officials cannot take place without individuals or organisations outside local government suborning these officials. Ethical standards in the public service need to be rigorously monitored and upheld; the same requirement obtains in the private sector. Sir Jeremy Beecham, Local Government Assoc, London SW1P 4ND.

JONATHAN Freedland is right to note the poverty of local democracy but have the acres of newspaper devoted to elected mayors, the Hunt Bill and the Nolan recommendations all passed him by?

The reality is that after 20 years of neglect, local government is buzzing with new initiatives and fresh enthusiasm. The Government's agenda will revitalise local democracy and thousands of hard-working councillors — motivated by an honest commitment to public service not personal kickbacks — are making a valuable contribution to this task.

Clr Andrew Howard,

Reigate and Banstead

Borough Council,

Reigate, Surrey, RH2 7JZ.

THAT a "viscous river of sleaze trickles along the corridors of local government" is, from my experience as a councillor on two councils and with contacts with other councils, self-evident. A Freedom of Information Act cannot come soon enough.

Tom Jackson,

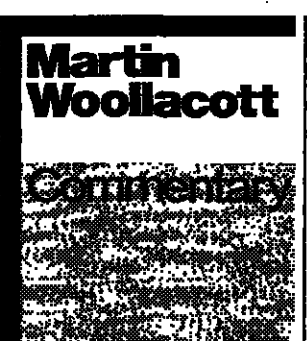
34 Russell Avenue,

Stockport SK6 8DT.

TRUST the Guardian will commission Mr Freedland to detail all the "bums", the "cozy relationships between planners and developers", the "expenses fiddles" and "kickbacks" that he considers are endemic in local government. I look forward, as does the district auditor, to read what he has to say about Nottingham. Clr Brent Charlesworth, Nottingham City Council.

Like Saddam, we must assess the real aims of US policy on Iraq

Small risk in bombing



Martin Woollacott

Commentary

There can be no disguising the fact that we are dealing with fearful possibilities in the Gulf.

Remote it may be, but what conceivably threatens there is that worst of 20th century nightmares, a war of mass destruction. How else can we read Saddam's vow to "wage the greater jihad", Israel's announced determination to retaliate in full against any strike on its cities, or America's announcement that its response to Iraqi use of chemical or biological weapons, would be "swift, devastating, and overwhelming"?

These are mass destruction threats, this is deterrence in day to day and potentially deadly action. However slender the chances are that the threats will be carried out or the deterrence fail, even the faint possibility of such events means that governments should be utterly serious and honest in deciding the best course. This is not normal policy, with room for special interest, declarations of high principle, or pleasure in the discomfiture of rivals or

friends. We are not, in other words, playing games.

When Boris Yeltsin says that America could start a third world war, what he means is naturally not that Russia could start a third world war, but that America could start a nuclear strike against the United States. That is yesterday's horror, not today's. What he means is that nobody knows what a mass destruction exchange between Iraq and Israel, or Iraq and America, or all three, might lead to, how it might, for instance, pull in other regional states, some of which also have, or may have, similar weapons. Even two or three of such weapons could kill great numbers of people, ruin the region, and change the whole world for the worse. Since this is such dangerous ground, why is anybody treading on it? The answer is that the risk is not truly new, but only appears in more dramatic form because there is a possibility that America and Britain will attack Iraq. It is a risk which, in a general way, has been with us since Middle Eastern states, beginning with Israel, began acquiring these weapons years ago, but which became more serious when Saddam used Iraq's wealth to get his own horrific tools of war. The eight-year long Iran-Iraq conflict was embryonic, a war of mass destruction, the second Gulf war teetered on the edge. So the issue is not whether threatening Iraq with an attack increases this awful risk, but whether it increases it more or less than other policies.

In judging this hard question, it is important to avoid

the black and white view that force is wholly bad and diplomacy wholly good. As Tony Blair and Robin Cook insist, the two are intermingled, and not only in the sense that the one feeds up the other. First, it is important to grasp that American policy is aimed not so much at the announced aim of restoring the inspection regime as at pushing Saddam back into the isolation from which he had begun to emerge. It is aimed, in fact, at separating Saddam from his friends. The American squeeze is as much on Russia, France, China, and the big Arab states as on Iraq itself.

That squeeze is not, as incorrectly perceived, to join in or endorse a military attack but to produce the acceptable compromise on inspection that they claim is possible. Already the effort to wrest such a compromise from Saddam is producing irritation, and more than irritation, in Moscow, Paris and other capitals. The effect of the American threat, then, is to reintroduce Saddam's friends to his deeply untrustworthy nature. One Russian newspaper complained this week that Saddam's intransigence threatened to destroy Russian foreign policy's last shreds of credibility.

All roads lead to such disillusion. If the efforts of the many envoys — Russian, French, and Arab — trying to come up with a formula to avoid conflict do produce one, and the US accepts it, the chances are very, very high that Saddam would soon renege on it, as he did with his "presidential sites" play over the last couple of months.

Iraq's friends could hardly then return to their old line of urging a softening of both the inspection regime and of sanctions. If there is an attack, on the other hand, the likely outcome would be serious, raised again, as it was in a recent letter by senior Republicans. They will have picked up on the talk about invasion and the lobbying of US Air Force advocates of "strategic air war", meaning an overwhelming, sustained campaign to smash the foundations of governmental power in Iraq. They will note the Marine force now on its way to the Gulf. What we in Western capitals see as options that are so politically difficult that they are highly unlikely to be taken up, they have to see as real possibilities. And, going back to the mass destruction risk, the Iraqis will have been alive to every word on retaliation coming from Washington and Tel Aviv.

Saddam must know he risks the revival of a full scale effort to remove him from power, even if the conflict remains conventional. If he used chemical or biological weapons, on Israel, on the Americans and British, or against Western targets on Arab territory, he would alter the nature of the struggle in many terrible ways, but one outcome would certainly be that he and his ruling élite would not physically survive. That is the kind of logic to which he has always responded in the past. It can be said that there is a good chance, therefore, that military action can be avoided, and, if it is nevertheless undertaken, only a small risk that it

might tip over into a more intense conflict. That risk has to be set against the other risk, that of letting Saddam freely upgrade his mass destruction arsenal, including his nuclear arsenal, with all the possibilities that he might one day use it, represented by the alternative policy of modifying the inspection regime so that it becomes a nonsense.

Whatever happens, it is clear we are paying the price for much inattention, negligence, and lack of will since 1991. In all the talk about President Clinton being a man of mixed character but a good president, it is forgotten that, under him, American foreign policy has seriously faltered, not least in the Middle East. Where once there was a coherent plan and worthwhile objectives to which the governments and peoples of the Middle East, the US, Russia, and Europe could all to some extent subscribe, there came to be, instead, a muddle of ineffective policies. If Russia, France, and China had grounds for their changed attitude to Iraq, it lies in this largely American failure. Whatever risks we end up taking in the next few weeks, there has to be a new strategy for the Middle East, encompassing a tough-minded approach to Iraq's future, new moves on Iran, and real pressure on Israel's obstructionist government. It does not matter whether it is provided by President Clinton or President Gore, but without it, the risks we are supposedly guarding against in the Middle East will not only not go away but will grow worse.

This is the price of negligence and lack of will since 1991

"re-isolating" the Saddam regime is clear.

It is reasonable, all the same, to argue that a short aerial campaign will not solve the problem represented by Saddam's refusal to accept adequate inspection. Yet that very fact enters into the calculations. Saddam is a cautious man of paranoid character who understands the US as a capricious power, sometimes unexpectedly passive in the face of provocation, sometimes unexpectedly ready to go all the way. He and his henchmen must have noted the endless Washington discussions about the limited value of a short air campaign, but they will not necessarily have taken those

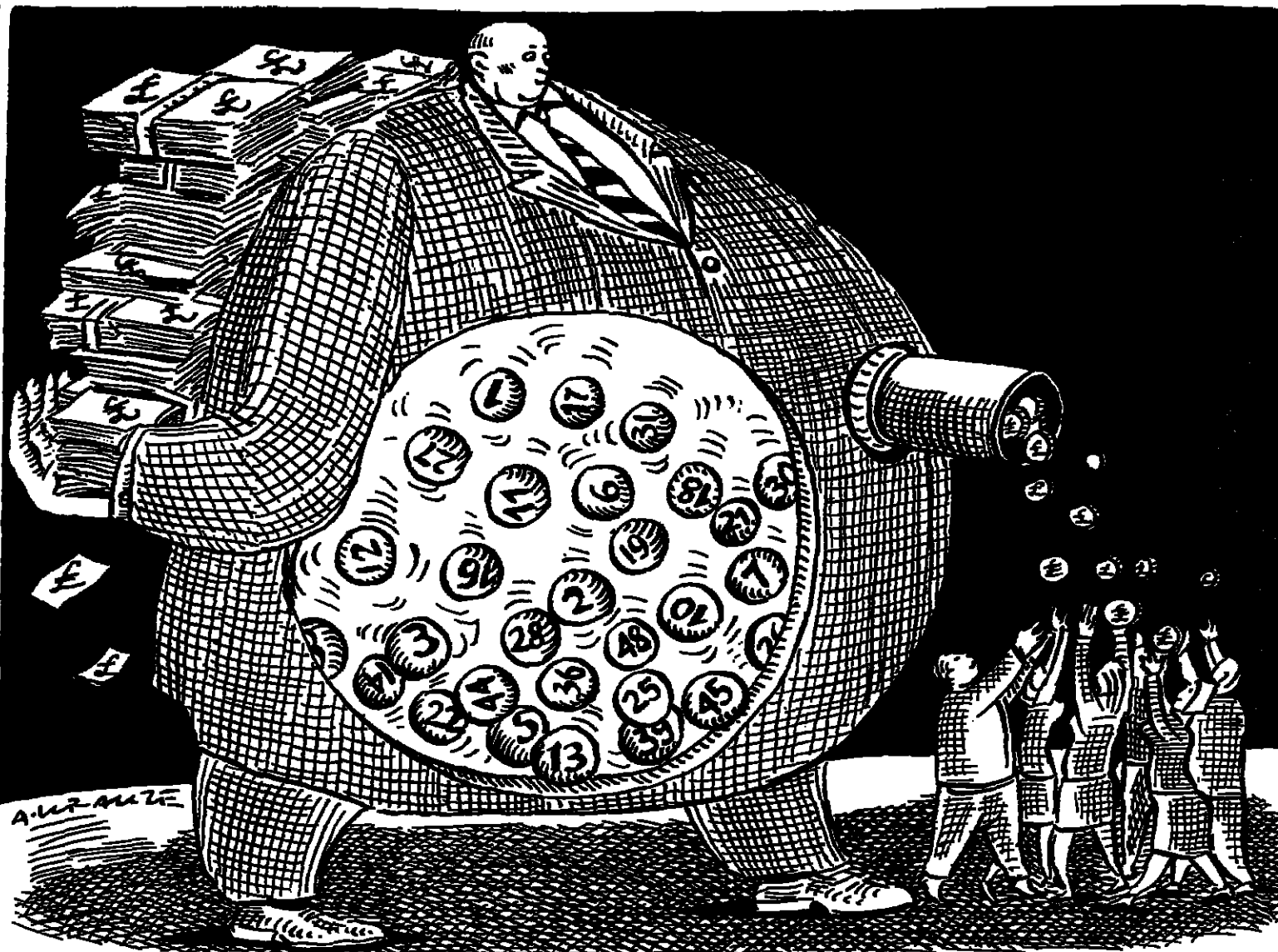
Our friends from
the town hall

Mark Lawson



Coincidentally or not, Mandelson's offer to redraft shadow ministers' questions occurred in close prox-

Whether or not the Government intends to change the voting system, senior figures have this week disturbingly adopted the rhetoric of anti-democratic administrations. In objecting to opposition by trivia, the Blairites are conducting government by whinge. Their sensitivity is becoming almost sinister.



Catherine Bennett



would feel some uneasiness about fleecing so many of his flock. But an accommodation has been reached. Brilliantly by re-defining the National Lottery as the "People's Lottery", Blair has sidestepped the moral issue — who is he to impose his personal values on the People? — and, at the

Matthew Engel



NONE of these factors applies in 1996. I don't doubt the depths of Saddam's evil. But an argument over the nationality of weapons inspectors is not a reason for war, even against the likes of him, unless you are very, very sure about what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. Clinton and Blair have not convinced me they are at all clear on any of these points. I hope they have a few cautious old warhorses whispering in their ears about the reality of battle. If not, Tony, please call me. before you get us all into something very stupid indeed.

indeed, far from bringing to the people, this great, nationalised scam is really One Big Con. The scam is being run by Chris Smith, the apostle of the members of the existing "good cause" boards; he will appoint the New Opportunities Board (and "spectre" into the "good cause" board, and a new good cause"), and an advisory panel on the selection of the next lottery operator. "I am committed to seeking an improvement in the quality of the good cause panel on a not-for-profit basis – for the next licence in 2001." Before he embarks on his quest, Smith should perhaps address a question that has troubled him: that two key operatives have now been sacked for subsidising peccadilloes, how does he justify the greater racket of so much lying to a wiser?

Everest
FIT THE BEST



Mail order shops around

Reputations

The Argos bid is just one bright idea from GUS's prodigal son. Report by ROGER COWE

AS A returning prodigal son, Lord Wolfson, 62, has wasted no time breaking traditions at Great Universal Stores, the mail order group which this week bid £1.6 billion for Argos.

The takeover bid for the catalogue retailer is the first for so long that nobody at GUS can remember the last one — helping to give one of Britain's biggest retailers the sobriquet of "sleeping giant".

It is the second record broken since Lord (David) Wolfson succeeded his cousin Leonard, also Lord Wolfson, as chairman two years ago. He is the third family member to lead the empire since its creation by their fathers in the 1830s.

The new chairman arrived to find fundamental problems in the market GUS leads. He had the unfortunate distinction of announcing its first fall in profits for almost 50 years when he presented the annual results last year. His reaction was typically forth-

right: the group might have done better by breaking the run of profit increases earlier, rather than being driven by a desire to maintain superficial progress.

But then there is no love lost between the two peers — the present chairman left the business in 1978 after falling out with Leonard.

David Wolfson has never been one for standing on ceremony. He is the kind of able, intelligent person whose incapacity for suffering fools is matched by a love for puncturing pomposity and a belief in his own judgement. "Wasps" would be a gentle way of describing his humour.

These traits have been frequently evident in politics, too, where he took a sabbatical to run Margaret Thatcher's private office after leaving GUS.

Lord Wolfson was the kind of tall, handsome businessman who charmed the Tory leader. Since returning to business in 1985 he has not joined the Conservative circle or allowed his name to be



Picking up a bargain? Lord Wolfson's task now is to persuade Argos's shareholders to accept the bid. PHOTOGRAPH: MATT MOSS; PHOTOMONTAGE: SUZANNE HALLAM

used in party-political campaigns. Those who know him say he rarely comments on politics and was not necessarily even a Thatcherite.

He was recruited by the then Tory party treasurer, Alastair Macalpine, and initially served as secretary to the shadow cabinet before the 1979 election. In the Path to Power, Lady Thatcher recounts how he was brought into Downing Street. He was asked merely to take charge of correspondence — Lord Macalpine thought of him because of his experience in the

GUS mail-order business, which seemed to him appropriate to the task.

Lady Thatcher observes: "David's talents were put to a good deal wider use than sorting the mail: he gave insights into what business was thinking, provided important contacts and proved particularly adept at smoothing ruffled political feathers." The last is surprising for a man who seems to care little about feathers of any kind.

She says he was one of the few people confident enough to tell her she was wrong.

Lord Lawson also reveals in his autobiography how Mrs Thatcher's chief of staff told her to sack himself and Norman Tebbit in the mid-1980s because he regarded them as political liabilities.

Lord Wolfson's strength is seen as clear, analytical thinking, unclouded by convention, tradition or emotion. "He has a tremendous intellect", observed one City analyst. Another said: "He has the ability to reduce very complex things to a very simple level."

David Jones, chief execu-

tive of Next — where Wolfson made his reputation spearheading the retailer's recovery — commented: "He has a remarkable gift for focusing on the important issues." Wolfson stays at Next chairman until the annual meeting in May.

Next grew under Wolfson and Jones, a well-matched team of a chairman alive with ideas and a chief executive who knew which ideas were worth pursuing.

But many in the City found it difficult to accept the chairman's refusal to make obel-

sance to the gods of money — which looked like arrogance when the company needed as many friends as it could get. But he is a very private man, keener on his family than on City types and uninterested in mixing business with the pleasures of golf and bridge — at which he is very good.

The impression of arrogance is reinforced by a smooth, almost sneering delivery and a permanent twinkle in the eye. But that impression is mistaken, say those who know him best. The apparent arrogance is

'He doesn't like bullshit. He can be critical and use his wit in a very cutting way'

seen more as a combination of shyness and disdain for both the niceties of City routine and banality of some City concerns.

"Some analysts in the early days thought he had rather a dilettante attitude", one recalled. "At meetings, he would lean back in his chair, often smoking a cigar, looking very bored."

"He doesn't like bullshit. He can be quite critical and use his wit in a very cutting way," said another close observer. "If a journalist writes some rubbish he treats them with total contempt, and he gets irritated when analysts ask stupid questions."

At Next, for example, he was once asked how much new space the chain was planning to open in the coming year. "How should I know?" came the answer. "It's not a figure we can know."

MORE recently he was asked about stock levels by Morgan Stanley's Julie Ramshaw, an analyst who briefly worked at Laura Ashley, with its legendary stock problems. Wolfson batted back with a cutting reference to her experience of excess stocks.

At GUS, the chairman was pressed for a breakdown of sales between men's, women's and children's clothes. An impatient Lord Wolfson eventually snapped: "Let's just say that men aren't buying much womenswear this year."

GUS has been buying plenty since the new chairman took over.

First, he has spent to hire professional managers at the top, rather than following the company's autocratic tradition. More substantially, he has spent billions of pounds buying American information processing companies, investing in a property joint-venture with British Land and acquiring the innovative catalogue business.

Now Argos is the target as GUS aims to turn its mail-order heritage — which had threatened to become a liability as the traditional mail-order market declined — into an asset for the coming age of electronic home-shopping.

If his admirers are right, Lord Wolfson will have the right analysis to lead it. But first he has to persuade Argos shareholders to accept his offer, and then he has to make the combination work.

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Burgeoning bank looks forward to busier future

Euro Eye

Mark Milner

CARRY on as they are, and the putative European Central Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development could find themselves the subject of headless chicken jokes. Not so the third of the triumvirate of European-based supranational financial institutions, the European Investment Bank. Its president, Sir Brian Unwin, is in office at least until April next year, a period during which he and the bank expect to be extremely busy.

But will the EIB, as it celebrates its 40th anniversary, find itself too busy?

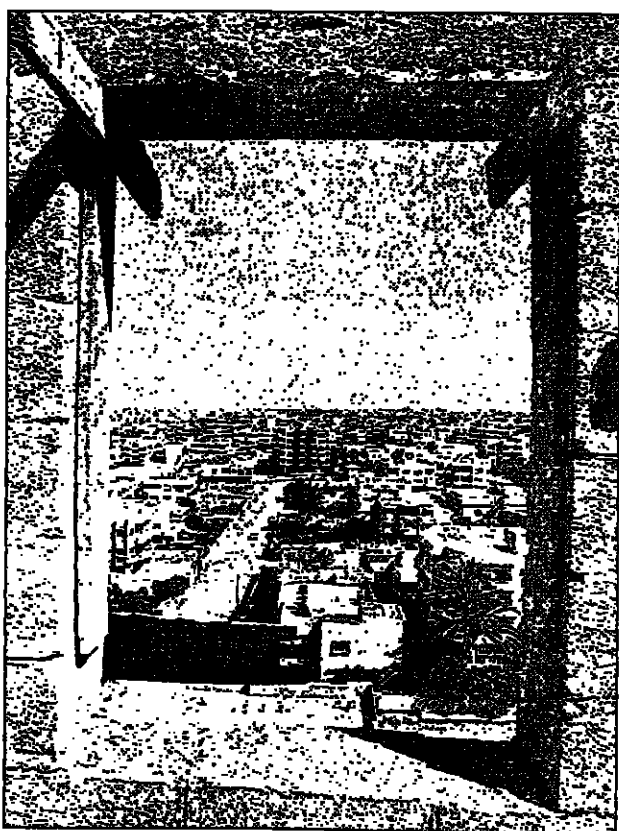
As the European Union's in-house bank the EIB has always focused on the community's priorities. In 1958, its task of helping promote economic integration — primarily through long-term loans — was tackled by addressing regional economic disparities. From 1958 until the introduction of structural funds in the early 1970s, the EIB was the only internal mechanism for dealing with such regional differences.

These days, though still wedded to the bank's founding principles, priorities have shifted. Last year it was support for the single currency's development and enlargement of the community. This year it will, according to the working title for the bank's annual forum, be "investment and jobs".

Announcing the bank's results this week, Sir Brian acknowledged that the bank was "at a very important stage of its development."

That could be taken for British understatement.

The overwhelming major-



Gaza, which now benefits from the financial support of the European Investment Bank. PHOTOGRAPH: S. FORREST

ity of the bank's lending has been for infrastructure projects in sectors such as energy, telecommunications and transport. It helped finance the Channel tunnel, London Underground's Jubilee line extension and more recently London and Continental Railways' freight project to build the high-speed link from Folkestone to the capital.

Last year it lent 23 billion euros (£15.3 billion) to EU projects out of a total portfolio of 36 billion euros.

As a legacy of some of its members' colonial history, the bank also has mandates to back projects in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. Members bordering the Mediterranean are keen on helping their southern neighbours, so the EIB is involved in loans to North African and near-eastern states. Gaza and the West

Bank have been added to its mandates; now South Africa has, too.

Closer to home, the bank is becoming increasingly involved in lending to countries queuing up to join the union. Even within the EU, its role is expanding. Last summer, in a neat display of political acumen, the EIB put forward a series of suggestions to the heads of state gathered for the Amsterdam summit. As they offered the prospect of allowing those heads of state to suggest they were tackling unemployment, the EIB was given the green light. The result was its Amsterdam Special Action Programme, which is taking the EIB into health, education and the provision of risk capital — itself a departure — to help small- and medium-sized enterprises, especially within the hi-tech sector.

Progress towards some of its objectives comes naturally. The bank is a large, highly regarded borrower on the financial markets — virtually the equivalent, in both its credit-rating and the scale of its operations, to the biggest of the European region's sovereign borrowers.

It is using its status to encourage the development of the single currency by issuing a sizeable chunk of its debt either in euros or in currencies convertible into euros. Later this month, it will offer a two-billion euro bond to which it hopes to attract international investors, especially from the United States. It is similarly able to help the development of capital markets in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic by borrowing in zloty, forint and crowns.

EIB officials insist the bank will have little problem in coping with expansion, provided it is controlled. That, however, will not be easy. Critics of the euro worry that its introduction will increase regional imbalances because policy-makers in individual countries would be unable to use either interest or exchange rates to meet changing economic circumstances. If that were to happen, it is not hard to see the EIB being asked to take on even more work in its traditional areas.

Central and eastern Europe is likely to become increasingly demanding of the bank's time and resources. The amount of political capital invested in EU enlargement will mean ever-greater pressure on institutions with the capacity to help applicant states prepare for membership. Behind the pre-accession countries of the region looms Russia. It can only be a matter of time before the EIB is asked to get involved. Nor are the member states on the EU's southern flank likely to tolerate any slackening of the EIB's interest.

At present the bank manages its programme with about 1,000 staff. But a third of that total is involved in only 10 per cent of lending. As demand increases, something may have to give.

The Guardian Saturday February 7 1998

Expensive...

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Countrywide fined...

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Expensive sports shoes out of step with fashion as consumers rebel

Boom in trainers wanes

Roger Cowie

FIRST signs have emerged in the US that the boom in sports shoes has peaked, with gloomy predictions emerging this week from the sports goods industry's annual trade fair in Atlanta.

The slump is likely to mean lower prices for trainers as shops try to sell excess stocks. Paul Fireman, chairman of Reebok, has now gone so far as to warn of a "consumer rebellion" against the brands expensively marketed by him and competitors such as Nike and Adidas.

Reebok has been losing market share to those two brands, but Mr Fireman believes the whole market is turning down after years of dramatic growth since the early 1980s.

In the UK, demand remains high, with trainer sales growing by 7 per cent for each of the past two years. Trainers now account for 18 per cent of all shoe sales, up from 14 per cent 10 years ago, according to Verdict Research.

But US trends typically spread slowly to the UK, suggesting that such growth will soon start tailing off.

US sales growth has halved in the past two years. Sales this year are expected to advance by only 4 per cent.

The slump forced Reebok to issue a profit warning before Christmas.

Analysts blame a combination of fashion and demographics for the slowing market growth. And the problem for the big brands has been made worse by the entry into the market of casual fashion labels such as Tommy Hilfiger and Polo.

Many people have moved from trainers to work boots, hiking shoes and other casual footwear. The style change is linked to a move away from jeans. One US analyst said: "There is a very high correlation between wearing jeans and wearing sneakers. When Levi Strauss is closing plants, it's not good for athletic footwear." Levi announced in November that it would close 11 factories because of disappointing sales.

Trainer troubles stem from the fact that most are not worn for the athletic activity they were designed for, but are worn as everyday footwear. US research has discovered that less than one in five of sports shoes are actually bought for playing sports.



Reebok sneakers, modelled by basketball star Shaquille O'Neal, are going the way of the kipper tie — no longer cool

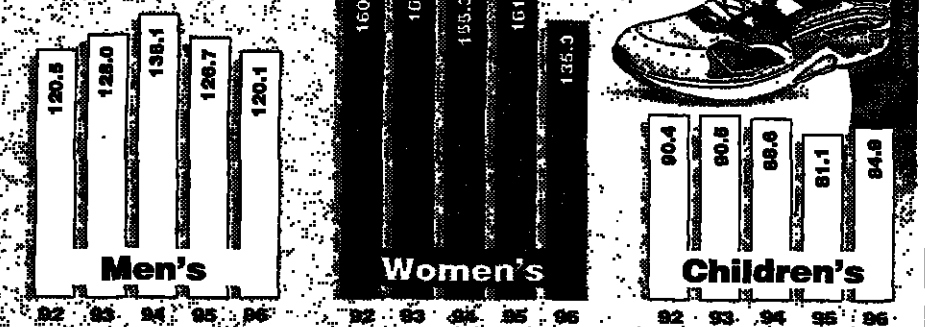
US industry experts see some salvation in the growth of women's sports. They believe this will leave mothers ready to buy trainers for their daughters.

They hope that girls will adopt trainers as fashion items in the same way that boys have done.

The industry's main hope is in the overseas markets, western Europe is already considered to be a mature market, but the brand owners are eyeing eastern Europe and other developing markets, citing "tremendous potential for both the short and long term".

If the shoe fits

Points of training shoes bought, millions



All trends must come to an end

SCHOOLCHILDREN have been mugged for them; fashion victims cannot get enough of them. The fashion-conscious make special trips to New York to ensure they get the latest trainers a few precious weeks before everyone else. But no trend lasts for ever, and the American brand owners have warned of tough times ahead, writes Susanah Barron.

This is news to the fashion world. "I would be really surprised to hear that," says Laura Craik, fashion features editor of The Face. "My acquaintances have more pairs of trainers than ever." Only last week, the hot topic of conversation among the trendies was the arrival of silver Nike Air Max trainers in the streets.

The trainer-mania of recent years, however, is certainly on the wane. "It hasn't been a vintage year," says Robert Wade-Smith, of Liverpool store Wade Smith, which was at the forefront of the trainers cult in the early eighties.

Much of the appeal of a pair of trainers is, of course, in its rarity value. Dead stock and limited editions are highly prized and, as certain styles hit the mainstream, they lose much of their fashion cred. When Nike Town opens in Oxford Street, for example, the latest Nikes will be simply too mainstream for the fashion crowd.

City tipsters for fashion stardom is the Jack Purcell trainer, developed by a Canadian tennis player in the thirties especially for tennis, badminton and squash. Also making a comeback is Converse: the basic basketball boots are starting to crop up in fashion shoots, and London streetwear emporium Browns Focus is doing well with the leather Converse All-Star trainer.

Rather more worrying for the trainer manufacturer is the store's either hot tip. The next big thing, apparently, is Clarks.



Alex Brummer

THE Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham alliance may be the mother of all mergers in terms of size (£100 billion) but the stock market and analytical euphoria that greets such deals is often way overdone. This is partly because market expectations are so short-term.

Although everyone realises, for instance, that in a merger of ethical pharmaceutical companies the research and development benefits could take a decade to come through, the expectations of delivery on other fronts, cost reductions, distribution and leadership at the top are often exaggerated. Executives at all levels from chairman and chief executive downwards are so busy manoeuvring for personal advantage that the adrenalin drive which can produce the biggest deal in the world in a matter of days can be lost.

It has been clear since last autumn that mergers, preferably friendly, have again become fashionable. In some industries, notably financial services, it is possible to invent all sorts of reasons why this is taking place now: globalisation, the advance of the euro and, perhaps most importantly of all, technological change, which means that, with a phone centre in Derby and a green field workforce of 1,500, the Prudential can now effectively take on NatWest on its own.

The current bout of takeovers was really kicked off by Gerry Robinson of Granada with his tough battle for Fortis at the turn of 1996. The risks of this combination were considerable, not least the level of debt taken on. But because the deal was so bitterly waged and the Fortis management all but dismembered the inflating, which can dog friendly amalgamations (like Royal/Sun Alliance) was avoided.

MOST impressively, in business terms, Granada's deal could not have been more timely. It coincided with a strong upswing in the UK and global economic cycle, which allowed the new owners to ratchet up prices and fill hotel rooms with relative ease.

The same cannot be said for the other grand brand products merger of the 1990s, Diageo, the combination of GrandMet and Guinness. Unlike the Granada/Fortis merger, this one has been completed in a much less sympathetic climate. The downturn in Asia, one of the fastest areas of growth for an up market spirits manufacturer like Diageo, is already hitting earnings and sales hard. Bringing together the distribution arms of three separate companies in the region, GrandMet, Guinness

and Bernard Arnault's LVMH has proved far more complex than envisaged. And the peaceable boardroom atmosphere, advertised for the media and analysts in the difficult days before the merger was approved, is now being seen as a chimera as the GrandMet team tighten their grip at the top. The departure of Brendan O'Neill, the head of Guinness Brewing, being a decisive moment in this power struggle. The difficulties that have been seen at the most senior boardroom level are being repeated almost all the way down the chain. Which brings us back to the week's two prospective big deals — Glaxo Wellcome/SmithKline Beecham and the hostile bid by Great Universal Stores (GUS) for Argos. Even at this early stage the Glaxo/SKB deal looks to have its flaws. The first is at the top.

THE combination of Glaxo chairman Sir Richard Sykes with Jan Leschley of SKB looks like an explosive one. Sir Richard disposed of boardroom rivals with an abandon bordering on carelessness. The idea that the Sir Richard and Jan show will be sustainable over the long haul requires something of an act of faith.

But as has been argued on these pages this week there are other reasons to be sceptical about this merger. The assumption is that a deal of this scale will give Glaxo Wellcome/SKB competitive advantage, particularly in markets like the US. But that is not necessarily true. Take the 1994 Glaxo/Wellcome merger, at the time the largest of its kind. Then, the joint company had 4.7 per cent of the market place and the assumption was that this was a strong platform to drive higher.

The reality is that the share has fallen to 4.6 per cent and the same also is true about the Glaxo/Wellcome merger. The assumption is that a deal of this scale will give Glaxo Wellcome/SKB competitive advantage, particularly in markets like the US. But that is not necessarily true. Take the 1994 Glaxo/Wellcome merger, at the time the largest of its kind. Then, the joint company had 4.7 per cent of the market place and the assumption was that this was a strong platform to drive higher.

As for the GUS/Argos link, it also poses strong questions. Sure, there is a convergence between the two businesses as mail order becomes home shopping. But neither company is renowned for its managerial strengths. GUS is in a period of transition when the main task is to sweat existing assets, like its property portfolio (already begun).

But does it have the hands-on retailing skills at present to refit Argos, after a series of profit warnings, and turn it around in Asia, one of the fastest areas of growth for an up market spirits manufacturer like Diageo, is already hitting earnings and sales hard. Bringing together the distribution arms of three separate companies in the region, GrandMet, Guinness

Pru calls shots with £25m to lift banking game

Julia Finch

THE Prudential insurance group is pouring £25 million into a Derby business park to expand its telephone banking operation. The expansion will create 200 jobs by October and, the Pru believes, it could provide another 1,300 within four years.

The company is to build a new call centre on 16 acres of the Derby Pride development, which is also home to Derby County football club's new stadium. The call centre will be built in two phases and the first stage should be completed by October. The building will be twice as long as the football pitch.

Some of the jobs will be filled by workers on the so-called New Deal scheme where 18 to 25-year-olds are given training and work experience. The Government's Welfare to Work initiative, which is being masterminded by Sir Peter Davis, the Prudential's chief executive.

Countrywide fined £250,000 by PIA in mis-selling scandal

Rupert Jones

A £250,000 fine linked to pensions mis-selling has been imposed on Countrywide Independent, one of Britain's largest independent financial advisers networks.

It is the second six-figure penalty arising from the £4 billion scandal to be handed down by the Personal Investment Authority in the past 10 months. Insurance company days. Insurance company London & Manchester Assurance was fined a record £535,000 on January 28.

It is understood that several more large fines are in the pipeline, indicating that regulators are toughening their stance against firms which drag their heels in compensating victims of mis-selling. Countrywide is based in

The Pru offers a limited banking service, taking deposits and offering personal loans, but it has ambitions to move into current account banking. The insurer has considered bidding for several building societies and last year held takeover talks with NatWest Bank and the Woolwich.

Yesterday the Pru said the new call centre would accommodate its "ambitious plans for further expansion into the direct banking market".

In December the Pru was the subject of an unprecedented attack by the City's chief watchdog in the wake of the pensions mis-selling scandal.

It accused the company of putting its own interests before those of investors, having a cavalier attitude to consumer protection laws, selling unsuitable products and of having "deep-seated and longstanding failure in management". Its banking licence was granted before the pensions mis-selling scandal came to light.

Trump rolls dice in big resort sell-off

Mark Tran

DONALD Trump, the playboy property developer, has hired two investment banks to sell his Trump Hotels & Casinos Resorts for as much as \$2.7 billion (£2.4 billion).

The man who prides himself on the art of the deal has seen a number of casinos put on the block recently for high prices — including Station Casinos for \$685 million — and he wants to sell while interest is high.

Should he sell his casinos for the amount he is asking, Mr Trump will certainly have completed his comeback as described in his bestseller, The Art of the Comeback. The flamboyant property tycoon was nearly wiped out when his property empire collapsed in 1991.

Now the 51-year-old Mr Trump, with a net worth of \$3.3 billion, has paid all his debts and owns showpiece properties such as the Empire State Building.

Trump Hotels went public in March 1995 and consists of all of the property magnate's casinos — the Taj Mahal, Trump's Marina and the Trump Plaza casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey, as well as a riverboat casino in Indiana. Mr Trump is reported as having held discussions with at least two investment trusts.

Trump Hotels' cashflow this year is expected to be about \$300 million. Sold for the same multiple as Station Casinos, that would fetch a price of \$2.7 billion, including \$1.6 billion in debt.

If sold, the casinos could continue using the Trump name, but it is unclear whether the buyer would have to use it.

The use of the Trump name is of more than academic interest, as his sale of the Castle to Britain's Rank Organisation fell through a year ago when he realised that his name would no longer appear on the casino.

Borrowers cash in as more lenders scrap fee

Rupert Jones

HOME buyers received a boost yesterday when two leading lenders followed the Halifax's example and scrapped the unpopular mortgage indemnity insurance fee for many new customers. The move will mean savings of hundreds of pounds for borrowers.

Abbey National and Northern Rock look certain to follow the Halifax's lead, while someone with a £100,000 loan and a 10 per cent deposit will be £1,020 better off.

The Halifax's surprise move caught rivals off their guard, but they have been quick to respond. Abbey National, Britain's second largest mortgage lender, said it had decided to match the Halifax and was therefore scrapping fees for customers

because the borrower receives no benefit from the policy, which reimburses the bank or building society if a customer fails to meet repayments and it makes a loss.

The Halifax, the UK's biggest mortgage lender, said it would no longer charge a mortgage indemnity insurance fee for customers who put down a deposit of 10 per cent or more. A borrower with a £50,000 mortgage and a deposit of 10 per cent will save £613, while someone with a £100,000 loan and a 10 per cent deposit will be £1,020 better off.

The Halifax's surprise move caught rivals off their guard, but they have been quick to respond. Abbey National, Britain's second largest mortgage lender, said it had decided to match the Halifax and was therefore scrapping fees for customers

buying a property and putting down a deposit of 10 per cent or more.

"We see the move by Halifax to offer free mortgage indemnity guarantees up to 90 per cent loan-to-value as an attempt by them to recover market share," said Andrew Pople, Abbey's retail division managing director. Someone with a £50,000 loan and a deposit of 10 per cent or more will save anything between £150 and £623, he added.

The bank was also reviewing the position regarding fees for Abbey borrowers moving house, whatever the size of their deposit, he said. An announcement would be made next week.

Northern Rock said that from Monday it will no longer charge a fee for customers taking out a home loan of up to 85 per cent of the property's value.

Silver surge bends rules

Hard-pressed London market slows delivery, writes Nicholas Bannister

LONDON'S bullion market authorities have been forced to change a key trading rule to cope with the huge amount of silver being delivered to the City as a result of the buying spree by legendary US investor Warren Buffett.

The decision came as the silver price in London continued to soar. The morning "fix", at \$7.81 (£4.73) a troy ounce, was \$1.62 up on yesterday afternoon's price.

Last summer the metal was trading at about \$4.50 an ounce.

Mr Buffett, who has cornered a quarter of the world's silver supply, has asked for the precious metal to be delivered through the London Bullion Market, which states that delivery must take place within five days.

has been forced to extend the delivery period to 15 days because the usual delivery methods are not up to handling the volume sparked by Mr Buffett's purchases.

The market wants to avoid any of its members having to default as a result of late payment.

The association, in a formal statement, said: "The five-day window had been sufficient to allow for the physical logistics of moving a heavy and bulky metal in a secure and orderly fashion under normal conditions."

"Currently, however, silver is entering London in unusually large quantities, resulting in a queue of material entering the country."

"Good delivery silver is not in short supply, but it is located in various market centres around the world, and this extension will fa-

cilitate an even flow into [market] members' vaults in London."

Most overseas silver comes to London by air, which is costly, or by sea.

Silver trading on the London market in December was 59 per cent up on the same period the previous year, and the January figures are expected to show an even greater rise.

Mr Buffett is thought to control about 130 million ounces of silver.

Speculators, many of whom regard Mr Buffett as the world's most astute investor, have piled into silver in the wake of the legendary American.

Johnson Matthey, one of the world's biggest silver refiners, said yesterday that it had doubled output at its UK refinery in the past few weeks to meet the new demand.

News in brief

Output fall brings fear of recession

INDUSTRIAL output declined in December for the fifth consecutive month, prompting fear that the sector could be on the brink of a recession.

Industrial production declined by 0.2 per cent over the December period, confounding City analysts' predictions of a small rise — according to figures released yesterday by the Office for National Statistics. Output has now been falling every month since July, the longest consecutive decline since the depths of the 1990 recession. — Charlotte Denny

Thames waters Jakarta

THAMES Water International yesterday completed a 25-year, profit-sharing co-operation deal to distribute water to half of Jakarta after forming a joint venture with one of Indonesian president Suharto's sons, PT Kekar-Thames Airindo, a joint venture between Thames and PT Kekar-Thames Airindo, will be in charge of water treatment and distribution for the eastern half of the Indonesian capital. — John Aglinby in Jakarta

Store's bankable asset

SAINSBURY's fast-growing banking business will break into profit this year, ahead of schedule, the company said yesterday. The supermarket chain is adding 10,000 accounts a week to the 600,000 already opened. — Roger Coote

Senator disrupts Swiss deal

A US senator, who is leading the campaign for compensation for Holocaust victims whose wealth was confiscated and concealed in secret Swiss bank accounts, hopes to derail the planned merger of Swiss Banking Corp and Union Bank of Switzerland.

Alfonse D'Amato, chairman of the US Senate banking committee, has called on America's Federal Reserve to block the deal until the two banks co-operate fully with investigations into their dealings with the Nazis in the second world war. — Julia Finch

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.37	France 9.52	Italy 2.85	Singapore 2.87
Austria 20.24	Germany 2.87	Malta 0.810	South Africa 7.50
Belgium 2.51	Greece 4.57	Netherlands 3.219	Spain 242.02
Canada 2.308	Hong Kong 12.41	New Zealand 2.74	Sweden 12.97
Cyprus 0.8484	India 64.17	Norway 12.00	Switzerland 2.5
Denmark 1.153	Ireland 1.1455	Portugal 251.73	Turkey 351.500
Finland 8.81	Israel 5.32	Saudi Arabia 6.08	USA 1,6140

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Wolfson on the prowl, page 10

Trendy trainers run into problems, page 11

FinanceGuardian

Terminal struggle for power

Once Reuters ruled the wires and rode on the crest of a wave when the electronic information revolution hit. Then Bloomberg entered the race and a once cosy world got very complicated. DAN ATKINSON writes



Screen stars... Reuters and Bloomberg in use at Merrill Lynch. Mike Bloomberg, below, would like to sweep the opposition off the dealing desks

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

LUNCHTIME on Wednesday February 11 is ringed in red in the diaries — or electronic equivalents — of senior Reuters executives in London. It is unlikely they are looking forward to what is set to be an uncomfortable meal, because across the table will be gimlet-eyed City analysts keen to hear what the venerable news and information company has to say regarding allegations of industrial espionage in the United States.

For years these same analysts have smiled on Reuters as a favourite counter on the Stock Exchange gaming table, a deep-blue plaque, a British name that leads its field worldwide. One recent investment circular on Reuters carried a headline that said it all: "Mad for it".

They are not amused by breathless newspaper reports of a grand jury investigation in New York. They do not expect to see the Reuters name appear in the same sentence as that of the US Attorney's Office or the FBI Computer Crimes Unit.

They want to know what the hell is going on — and why. Their humour is unlikely to have been improved by Reuters's full-year figures, due the day before, which are forecast to show pre-tax profits dropped during 1997 from \$701 million to about \$588 million. The alleged dirty tricks in the States have played no part in this earnings fall;

rather, Reuters has been buffeted by the Asian meltdown (it is big in the Far East) and the strength of sterling.

As more and more deals are struck in electronic marketplaces, the prizes are glittering indeed. Every one of Reuters's rival Bloomberg's screens brings in \$100-\$1200 a month in rent, and the company has 100,000 such terminals around the world. Reuters has perhaps quarter of a million. But the price of failure, as Dow Jones Markets has discovered, is gruesome. An industry source said that "if you get it right you make vast money... if you don't... [it's] very, very expensive".

A fact that will not be lost on the participants in Wednesday's lunch.

At the heart of the allegation about dirty tricks is the esoteric world of securities-analysis software, the workings inside the boxes of tricks that allow traders to collate data on shares and bonds at the push of a button. Bloomberg roared ahead in the early nineties and it is no secret Reuters has been trying hard to catch up.

As part of that effort, Reuters acquired the company, now known as Reuters Analytics in Stamford, Connecticut, at the centre of the US Attorney's Office investigation. Initial allegations suggested Analytics improperly obtained or even stole "proprietary code" — copyrighted software — from Bloomberg, and that the code may have been used in its Reuters 3000 machine, the powerful new

product considered critical to its growth prospects.

A former Bloomberg employee, it was suggested, had been used as middleman in the theft.

On Wednesday, Reuters calmed the rumours with a lengthy statement in which it acknowledged it had hired a consultancy to carry out analysis of the competition, but denied any suggestions of theft. It said the US authorities were examining whether Analytics had induced the consultancy to provide Bloomberg data to Reuters in breach of subscription agreements.

Furthermore, the inquiry will investigate any possible incorporation of "reverse-engineered" Bloomberg software into Reuters products.

With luck, the worst Reuters can expect is a courtroom dispute exploring the arcane of intellectual property

rights. Reuters has launched its own investigation, using the New York firm of Wach-

tell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. It has also despatched a top-level troubleshooter, Geoffrey Westman, to untangle matters at Stamford. Three Reuters Analytics executives have been put on paid leave.

Nevertheless, even improper software copying would be a serious matter for Reuters. Tellingly, both the Bloomberg source and NatWest analyst Nicole Stewart used the same word: "integrity".

In a business delivering, above all, split-second, accurate information, any suggestion that the source could be tainted or poisoned in any way is catastrophic for the company concerned.

However, the crisis is already taking its toll in the City. NatWest Markets has downgraded Reuters shares from "add" to "hold", pending clarification. Some investors have moved already from "hold" to "sell".

The virtual marketplace was born. Fleet Street barons and the regional press woke up to the fact that dowdy old Reuters — an institution they had supported out of a vague sense of public duty — had become a goldmine, and the company was floated in 1984. Wire services were sexy — even

Exel, the Morris Minor of the industry (unexciting, but built to last), found itself on the end of a takeover bid.

But as Reuters was fitting its screens to every trading desk in the world and its currency-monitoring radiopagers to the waist-

bands of every trader from San Francisco to Hong Kong, Salomons, the Wall Street bank, was bidding a not entirely regretful farewell to the outspoken Mike Bloomberg, whose somewhat non-collegial approach had not always made him popular.

Mr Bloomberg became Bloomberg, and by the end of 1987 Bloomberg was in London, its core of people telling anyone who would listen that it intended to challenge Reuters. Few paid much attention.

But in the nineties, financial information just grew and grew. In 1996, the four biggest suppliers of the traders' magic boxes — Bloom-

Boxing clever

BOND trading must be the ultimate profession for the channel surfing generation. A trader's desk can have up to a dozen screens constantly flashing up new data on prices, economic information and news stories which could move the market.

Traders spend their day scanning this endless sea of data, analysing how the information will affect prices. Timeliness is critical, says George Whitehead, director of capital market sales at Nikko Securities.

"Prices react instantly to new information." One of the stories of the moment is whether the West will go to war against Saddam Hussein. Wars, apparently, are

good for the UK and US markets as investors rush out of smaller, riskier countries.

Bloomberg got a jump on their competitors by providing traders with the ability to analyse historical information as well as keep up to date with news and prices. Mr Whitehead says the ability to message any other user of the system globally is another plus.

But even with its added extras, Bloomberg is unlikely ever to dominate the information market completely. Traders like to scan as much information as possible, lest someone somewhere get hold of a market moving fact before them.



Stamford affair. Reuters and Bloomberg.

It is, however, an ill wind... much of the cash pouring out of Reuters share is piling straight into Bloomberg. A source close to senior Bloomberg management said yesterday: "I think there's a lot of wry amusement". He said Bloomberg's top brass was taking the view that Reuters had been, at the very least, incredibly stupid.

But this is no friendly rivalry. Bloomberg, he said, was generally contemptuous of Reuters, an organisation it derided as lazy and complacent. He added that Mike Bloomberg would want his pound of flesh should Reuters be found to have committed any civil wrong.

Mr Bloomberg, the idiosyncratic genius behind the company, will not be playing the affair down, said the source. And should a former employee have been behind any impropriety, Mr Bloomberg will pursue him or her to the ends of the earth. This is someone who considers employees moving on to other jobs to be guilty of treason. For such a person actually to assist Reuters would be, to him, the worst of crimes.

So what is Bloomberg's endgame? The source was unequivocal: "Bloomberg's endgame is global domination".

berg, Reuters. Dow Jones Markets (formerly Felerate) and Bridge — took in \$4.4 billion in sales. Reuters news correspondents, who once upon a time grandly refused to supply reports to the "commercial" service, now formed a very small dog tagged by an ever-expanding tail.

By the mid-nineties banks and brokerages were striving

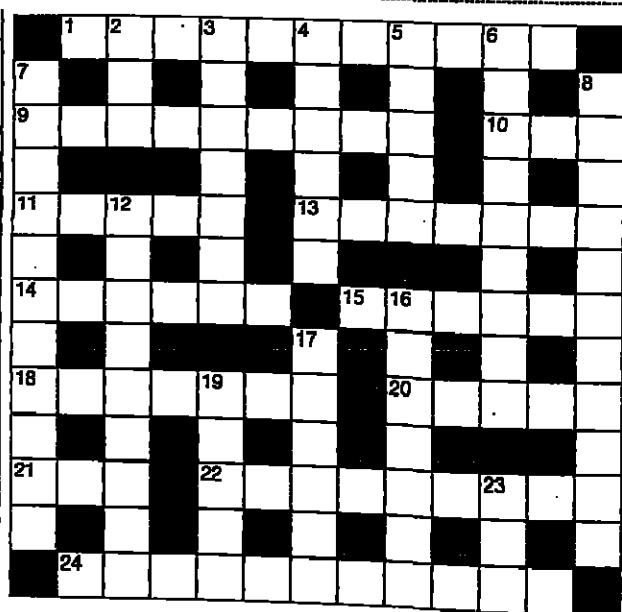
to shrink the ton of ironmongery that weighed down every trader's desk.

Reuters itself forecast a fight to the finish in which only two big players would be able to dominate the global information industry. And — with Dow Jones Market costing its parent a fortune — there seems little doubt, at present, that they are likely to be the two protagonists in the

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U P I I T E M P O
S P I C E D I E V
C O R G A L E A C L E
K D N E L E G A N T

Solution No. 8664



Across

- 1 Pretend (11)
- 9 Unaware (8)
- 10 Dark viscous stuff (3)
- 11 Student — part of eye (5)
- 13 As a substitute (7)
- 14 Long thin sword (5)
- 15 Name of shrub or girl (6)
- 16 Getting on (in years) (7)
- 20 Brazilian dance (5)
- 21 Signal for action (3)
- 22 Duck, moorhen, etc (9)
- 24 Transitory (11)

Down

- 2 Sick (3)
- 3 Spanish city (7)
- 4 Short-sightedness (5)
- 5 Scene of combat — catalogues (5)
- 6 London area (with Spurs) (9)
- 7 Never green tree (6,5)
- 8 Scene of card game (6,5)
- 12 Fantasy (from opium?) (4,5)
- 16 Nowhere near the winner (4-3)

- 17 Arrangement of interconnected parts (6)
- 19 A.L., historian (5)
- 23 Admit (3)

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THE DIAMOND AND WATCH SPECIALIST.

CP 11/150

The Guardian

the week

Saturday February 7 1998

Low-flying can be a terrifying experience for pilots. Now, after the disaster in the Dolomites, civilians are frightened too. How long will it be, asks **Mark Honigsbaum**, before Britain sees such a tragedy?

A flight into fear

Low levels at high speeds... an RAF Tornado skimming the ground during a training flight over Wales, above; and a Sepean Jaguar, left, capable of more than 900mph

PHOTOGRAPHS: QUADRANT; PHILIP REECE

Tom Cruise has a lot to answer for. Ever since he sent a Russian MiG into a tailspin over the Persian Gulf 11 years ago, fighter pilots have had to fight the perception that they are all Top Gun-style mavericks, hooked on the sudden rush of G-forces and death-defying stunts at high altitudes.

Now, following the disaster in the Dolomites — when an American warplane severed the wires of a cable car at 300ft and sent 20 skiers plunging to their deaths — pilots also have another image to live down: that their risk-taking extends to dangerous stunts at low altitudes too.

Eyewitness reports from the valley floor at Cavalese, where the disaster occurred on Tuesday suggest that the pilot of the EA-6B Prowler deliberately flew beneath the cable, clipping the wires with his tailfin, in a dangerous act of bravado during what should have been a routine low-level NATO training exercise.

Whether or not the allegations are true — and they are hotly contested by the Americans — the disaster has focused attention on the whole issue of tactical flying and the psychology of fighter pilot

training. Should flyers be encouraged to test their machines to the limits in order to prepare for the "real" tactics they may have to employ in warfare, or are low-level sorties simply an irrelevant hang-over from the cold war?

And if low-level flying is allowed to continue, how long before a Dolomites-style disaster happens in Britain? Already in Britain NATO jets are permitted to train at heights as low as 250ft over Scotland and the Lake District, and in parts of mid-Wales that ceiling falls to just 100ft. There are few cable cars to clip of course, but there are plenty of other obstacles, from telephone and electricity pylons to hang-gliders and civilian aircraft. And despite strict rules and monitoring procedures to prevent collisions, on occasion the unforeseen does occur.

In 1992 an RAF Jaguar on a low-level training exercise over mid-Wales collided with a Cessna light aircraft near the village of Carno, Powys. Both pilots were killed instantly and wreckage from the jet narrowly missed hitting a baby who had been sleeping out of doors in her pram moments before. Similarly, in 1993 a Tornado clipped an RAF helicopter during a training exercise over the Lake

District, killing the pilot and a passenger on board. And in October 1992 another Tornado pilot travelling at 600mph narrowly missed a commercial aeroplane carrying 18 people on a flight over Tyneside. The Civil Aviation Authority subsequently branded the RAF pilot "irresponsible" for practising an emergency pull-up from a low level in an area where civilian air traffic was common.

According to campaigners against low flying, such near-misses are evidence that a large-scale disaster in Britain is inevitable. "It is only through a combination of skill and good fortune that large civilian fatalities have been avoided until now," argues Gillian Metcalf of Freedom of the Skies, which has been campaigning for an end to low-level flying over Wales since 1992. "That's why instead of waiting for it to happen, we believe the Government should call a halt to low-level flying immediately. It is not only dangerous, but unnecessary."

Rubbish, responds the Ministry of Defence. Yes there have been collisions but they have all been in mid-air and so far RAF flyers have avoided any "ground damage". No RAF pilot who values his wings would dream of indulging in the

sort of high jinks featured in Top Gun or even those practiced by Spitfire pilots during the second world war. Nevertheless, it is essential for pilots to practice their low-level flying skills in order to avoid radar detection and take out the sort of ground-to-air missile systems they might face in Bosnia and the Gulf. As Ken Delves, the editor of *Flypast* magazine and a RAF Tornado pilot for 20 years, puts it: "The days of high spirits and high jinks are gone. You might have got away with that sort of behaviour 50 years ago, but if you disobey the rules today, you will find yourself with a court martial."

John Nichol, the former British

'Trees and other obstacles are coming towards you at a rate of knots'

Tornado pilot who was shot down over the Gulf six years ago, agrees. "Anyone who has flown a fighter knows that the suggestion that pilots take unnecessary risks is just wrong."

It is tempting to take the experts' word for it. After all, it is notoriously difficult to qualify as a real life Top Gun. First you have to get through the selection exam, a procedure which includes tough fitness and co-ordination tests and the ability to withstand the sort of G-forces that would cause most of us to black out, or "grey out" to use the air force jargon.

Then comes basic flight training in a single-propeller aircraft, then an intermediate aircraft and eventually a jet such as a Hawk. All the while there are constant tests and threats of being "chopped" because you cannot make the grade. Even when, after three years, you finally qualify as a fighter pilot and are placed with an Operational Conversion Unit to begin training on a Tornado, Harrier or Jaguar, it takes a minimum of six months to learn the ins and outs of a particular plane.

In total, the cost of training an RAF fighter pilot is £3 million. Yet it is only when pilots are transferred to their front-line

squadrons that they finally begin flying at the sort of levels they may need in combat. By all accounts that first low-level sortie is an alarming experience. "Imagine you are flying at 700mph just 100ft above ground level," says one RAF Tornado pilot who asked not to be named. "Trees and other obstacles are coming towards you at a tremendous rate of knots. You are trying to plot your course and at the same time you have to be aware that someone could be shooting at you. You simply cannot afford to make a mistake."

That is why pilots insist that it is nonsense to suggest that modern flyers have the time — or inclination — for stunts at low altitudes. But against this is the ethos still present in many air forces that flying fighter jets is all about having the "right stuff", the ability to withstand extreme stress and, on occasion, push yourself and your plane to the limit. The ideal fighter pilot is supposed to be a "stable extrovert", but in practice there is always a chance that a few unstable ones slip through.

So what happened in the Dolomites this week? Following the cable-car accident inhabitants of Cavalese have alleged that NATO

aircraft regularly train at levels lower than 2,000ft and two eyewitnesses claim to have seen a military plane stunt-flying a few miles from the scene minutes before the accident. The rumours have been fuelled by the fact that the Prowler is equipped with sophisticated electronic anti-radar equipment and weapons systems specifically designed for low-level raids. It would seem logical that if the planes are to be used in a forthcoming conflict — such as the Gulf — then pilots would want to train at the lowest levels possible.

However experts say that even a daredevil pilot would know to take extra care when flying through a mountainous region — precisely because of the danger of running into cables. "Hitting a cable is the biggest fear a pilot has," explained one former RAF pilot. "You just cannot see them coming. It's why when we were trained at low levels in Germany we were always taught to pass over pylons rather than between them."

According to the Italian defence ministry, the Prowler was five miles off course when the accident occurred and flying at an unauthorised height — a claim belatedly accepted yesterday by the Americans. But there seems to be a

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Who owns Pooh and co? Thanks to global culture we all do, says Jonathan Glancey Stuffed and nonsense

Children in the United States can be forgiven for thinking that Winnie the Pooh is American. After all, the tubby honey-loving bear is better known for his starring role in Disney cartoons than as the main character of A.A. Milne's original children's stories. And, in any case, Pooh and his pals — or at least the Harrods toys Pooh, Piglet, Kanga, Tigger and Eeyore — are based on have been US citizens, with a home in a New York museum, for over 50 years.

For some unfathomable reason, Gwyneth Dunwoody, a Labour backbencher, has decided to use the occasion of Tony Blair's trip to Washington to campaign for the return of the famous five to Britain. Is she taking the mickey? It's certainly been fun, not to say surreal, to see Blair and Clinton, on the possible eve of world war three, discussing the fate of five stuffed animals. Imagine the New York Chamberlain at Munich in 1938 saying to Hitler: "That's settled then, Herr Chancellor, let peace in our time as long as the German people send back all the Hornby train sets they've bought from Gammages."

Rudi Giuliani, mayor of

New York, has made it clear that Pooh is staying for keeps, while the New York Post says: "New Yorkers would happily return Pooh if Mr Blair agreed to take back the Spice Girls, Liam Gallagher and the Tele-Tubbies." Faceious it may be, but the Post's point is a good one. In an age of global communications, the property of one country is sold around the world a million times and more every day.

The same is true of Pooh, Eeyore and co. The animals exist in the collective imagination, released each time a child opens a copy of *Now We Are Six* or squats in front of breakfast telly and follows the antics of a cartoon Pooh who speaks in a soft American accent.

The whole idea of which nation owns what slice of history is fast becoming a nonsense. While it's true that, historically, imperial invaders have plundered the civilisations they have subjugated, today it's more fascinating than disturbing to see mummies and stuffed alligators turn up in museums around the world. Improvements in transport, security and insurance mean that artworks can be shipped around the world and shown to global audiences.



It could be said, and this will always stir controversy, that the art treasures of one culture can be best preserved by another, at least for a time. If the Elgin Marbles had stayed in Athens, they would

have rotted away by now like the Parthenon. They once properly adorned only when a suitable museum is built should they return to Greece. This is a hoary argument, but one worth exercising. And

Should we have them back? The soft toys at the centre of the controversy on display in New York

yet the idea of artworks being used as political shillies is increasingly irrelevant in an age of mass travel and the Internet.

The argument begins to get very silly indeed when it comes to who really owns what. If A.A. Milne gave those stuffed toys as a present to his New York publisher, what right has a Labour MP half a century later to demand them back? They have been in New York far longer than they were ever in England.

Where does the argument stop? There are boxes of papers that once belonged to the poets Philip Larkin, W.H.

Auden and John Betjeman in the United States as well as those of Evelyn Waugh. Shouldn't they come back? And what about dear old London Bridge, surely this priceless chunk of nursery rhyme heritage should be brought back to straddle the sweet Thames once more? This is the bridge that was featured in *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot, the famous English poet. Or was he an American? Who cares? The *Wasteland* belongs to anyone who reads or recites it (preferably through a loud hailer from the windows of an Oxford college), while London Bridge was sold

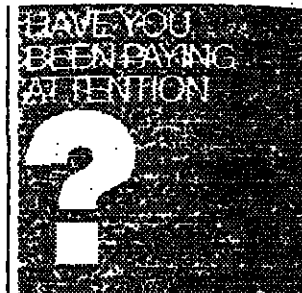
because it was no longer wanted. It was bought by Robert P. McCulloch, an oil tycoon, and now stands, a hugely popular tourist attraction, under the blazing Arizona sun.

Should Michael Jackson have been allowed to snap up Northern Songs, the portfolio of Lennon and McCartney favourites?

As for paintings and sculpture, forget it. Who, for example, can ever really own, say, Orazio Gentileschi's *The Finding Of Moses*? Commissioned from Caravaggio's leading acolyte in 1626 by Charles I, the painting hung in Castle Howard in Yorkshire from 1798 until Simon Howard bought it, through Sotheby's, to a foreign buyer, to the dismay of the National Gallery.

Should it be returned to Blighty? If so, to whom and where? Buckingham Palace? Castle Howard? The National Gallery? Or does it really belong to Italy from whence its painter and inspiration came? Why wasn't the last airworthy Messerschmitt 109 returned to the care of the Luftwaffe? It certainly wasn't safe in Britain: a top brass from the RAF pranged it last year and it will never fly again. Should the Caen stones that gave rise to many of our Romanesque and medieval churches and cathedrals be returned to France? Why should the bones of Che Guevara be buried in Cuba when the famous guerrilla leader, born in Argentina, died in Bolivia and renounced his Cuban citizenship in 1965? No. Leave Pooh in peace. He's earned his Green Card and belongs to American children as much as he does to the imagination of all children (of all ages) everywhere.

Ian Mayes's Open Door column returns next week.



- 1 Which entrepreneur, famous for his dangerous exploits, conquered Snowdon?
- 2 What is it about John Prescott's travel arrangements which is fuelling arguments?
- 3 What did John Prescott do to counteract this criticism and why did it backfire?
- 4 Who embarrassed the EU's Transport Commissioner and why?
 - a) Neil Kinnock
 - b) John Prescott
 - c) Richard Branson
 - d) Glensy Kinnock
- 5 What and where is "Dianaville"?



- 6 Who is this batsman and why couldn't he take the pace?
- 7 The drink-drive limit is likely to be cut to what?

- 8 What was Transport Minister Gavin Strang referring to when he announced "I could still have a good night out on that"?
 - a) Glensy Kinnock
 - b) Two pints of ginger beer shandy
 - c) £10 deal of cannabix
 - d) Windaloo and 10 pints of lager

- 9 What did Tony Banks describe as just as important as the Churchill Papers?

- 10 Where are Tony and Cherie staying during their American visit which should make them feel especially at home?

- 11 Which computer nerd forgot to include pi in his calculation?

- 12 Who have been criticised for "sickening violence" against the police?
 - a) Reggie and Ronnie
 - b) Clyde and Bonnie
 - c) Punch and Judy
 - d) Richard and Judy

- 13 Which singer is officially the best at getting down?
 - a) Madonna's papa is a fan of which singer?
 - b) Madonna
 - c) Celine Dion
 - d) Leonard Cohen
 - e) Pavarotti

- 15 Which of the following was not used by Brian Walden to describe Nelson Mandela?
 - a) ineffectual
 - b) arrogant
 - c) autocratic
 - d) white

Answers: left

Awards of The Week

Einstein of The Week

Melinda Messenger. "He asked for my autograph and I thought, 'Oh blimey, I don't know how to write one!'"

Cover Up of The Week

"I think people have had enough seeing women with all their clothes off. Soon there will be a demand for models to keep them on, and ours are the best in the world at that." — Amos Ben-Nash, who founded Original Idea, Israel's first ultra-Orthodox modelling agency.

Honourable Member of The Week

Due to a hacker's mischief, make MPs wishing to use their Westminster computers started finding they first had to answer the question "Do you have a small willy?". If they clicked on

No, they were subjected to more indiscreet queries. If they said Yes their reply was sent to every desk in parliament.

Customer Service Award

To a Blockbuster video store in Kent, who sent Adam Gill, a 21-stone roadworker from Kent, a letter addressed to Mr Fat Bastard.

Curse of Hello!

To Lisa Potts, the heroine nursery teacher who shielded her charges from a madman's machete attack. Potts announced she is dating Peter Robertson, a journalist who interviewed her for Hello! magazine; couples featuring in Hello!'s pages have a famous tendency to split up.

Feud of The Week

Name:

Geoffrey Martin

Job: European Commission's most senior UK official.

Feuds: Geoffrey Martin launched a blazing attack on the Murdoch Press, and the Sun in particular. He accused the "vulgar" paper of staging a "vicious and vindictive campaign" against the single European currency.

He said: "The campaign would cloud the vision of those who read the highly sophisticated words of the Sun's political editor, Trevor Kavanagh."

Name:

Trevor Kavanagh

Job: Political editor of the Sun.

Feuds: Kavanagh and the Sun believe the European Commission is corrupt and foolish. They claim that the only place where the single currency is popular is in Brussels itself.

He said: "Keep your Brussels snouts out... Mr Martin's arrogance beggars belief. Eurocrats are rattled, and the Sun is proud to have played a part."

Quiz answers

1) Richard Branson won his libel case against National Lottery director Guy Snowden, who then resigned.

2) Although Prescott calls for the nation to curb car use and use public transport he is chauffeured around in a gas-guzzling four-litre Jaguar.

3) He set an example by walking to work. (The empty Jaguar followed behind carrying just his paperwork.)

4) d — Glensy Kinnock. She was caught driving her Rover 800 with a tax disc that was eight months out of date. The EU's transport chief is Neil, her husband.

5) It is a proposed housing development to be built on 400 acres of Althorp estate which Earl Spencer has agreed to sell. Local residents have called it Dianaville.

6) Prince Charles. He said "I am absolutely irascible", after battling half an innings in Sri Lanka.

7) The equivalent of one pint of beer, or 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood instead of 80 as it is now.

8) b) Two pints of ginger beer shandy. Strang was insisting that the new drink-driving legislation would not curb fun.

9) Bobby Moore's 1966 World Cup Winners medal and other awards which are up for sale. Banks wants the medals bought for England with Lottery money.

10) At Blair House, the residence opposite the White House.

11) Bill Gates. He was unaware on a visit to Belgium that a notorious fan finger has been making celebrities there. Gates was duly hit full-on by a custard pie.

12) d — Punch and Judy. Complaints were received by Wiltshire libraries about a book containing cartoons of Punch hitting a baby and hanging a policeman. The books were withdrawn.

13) Leonard Cohen. His Greatest Hits was voted top of the misery chart as the album most likely to drive the listener to despair.

14) b — Celine Dion. In a Vanity Fair interview, Madonna admits the Canadian songstress is her dad's fave.

15) d — White. The TV pundit launched an attack on the South African President in a BBC2 programme called Heroes, saying Mandela "falls short of the giants of the past."

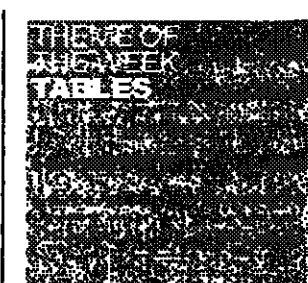
How you rate:

0-4 Jaws

5-9 Buz

10-14 Bke

15 Shanks' pony



Perhaps there is something we don't know about the first week of February, but hasn't there been an inordinate amount of tabulation this week?

A news story without an accompanying league table.

The first of these examples of tabuloid journalism, on Sunday, showed who were the busiest and the most idle in a poll of 2,156 Oxford students.

As might be expected, Law and Chemistry were subjects close to the top of the table in terms of how much study time they demanded of their students. But the most pressurised course was, a little surprisingly, dossy old Fine Arts.

Other traditional idlers' subjects, such as Philosophy and Archaeology and Anthropology were all down at the bottom of the table, with Human Sciences, a not very potent Oxford brew of biology, anthropology and sociology, the least demanding discipline, at 20 hours a week.

Another Sunday table provided the revelation that 90 per cent of lottery grants go to projects in wealthy parts of the country, with the least for handouts from poor areas almost always dismissed

out of hand on the time-honoured Robin Hood-in-reverse principle. This has Surrey received grants for 15 country homes, and Warwickshire £7.3 million for just one mansion house (whose owner said, "It's better than giving it to gays"), while an application for £3 million to turn a boarded-up Jacobean mansion in Warrington into a community centre was met with a refusal by grant scrutineers even to visit the site.

The fickle finger of lottery fate also favours the rich, as yet another league table showed on Friday. Worthing, West Sussex, of all places, has the highest per-head lottery winnings in the

country, after a resident's £4.8 million win made it six jackpot wins for the town — the same as for the whole of Manchester.

The Coleman's Mustard survey of food at football grounds provided more evidence of the poor getting the crumbs, in this case, greasy, rank crumbs. As you might imagine, the food was almost universally disgusting and overpriced.

Cambridge United coming top thanks to some sensational bacon rolls and Cornish pasties, and Leyton Orient bottom, due to a burger which "left a congealed slick of grease in its wake as it slid down the throat".

Elsewhere, we had a



table compiled by a music magazine on albums most likely to drive fans to depression. Leonard Cohen came top, with the Smiths not even making the top 10. Surely the most inventive tabulation of the week was a round-up of favourite last meals for condemned prisoners at the Walls Unit in Huntsville, Texas, where Karla Faye Tucker was executed. Given to journalists as part of the 60-page execution press pack, the league table showed that cheeseburgers and fries were chosen by 38 condemned prisoners. Amazing, really, considering how fatal all that cholesterol can be. Jonathan Margolis

A flight into fear

4 page 13 he genuine confusion over what the authorised height is — with some commentators putting it 1,000ft and the pilot himself putting it as low as 500ft. Until the records from the Prowler's black box are analysed, the accident is likely to remain a mystery.

In the meantime, fears are mounting that the same pressures — if indeed that is what lay behind Tuesday's accident — could lead to a similar disaster here. According to Bernard Moffatt, a spokesman for the Celtic League, a nationalist group that monitors low-flying over Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man, there are an average of 6,000 complaints a year in Britain about low flying but there have been just three courts martial in 20 years. Farmers in particular complain about the impact on cattle but there are also concerns that the high-pitched screech from jet engines could be impairing children's hearing.

The major fear is of collisions. Moffatt argues that the *Tornado* in particular has an "appalling" record and that some pilots are either too undisciplined or unprepared to handle such a complex aircraft. "I am certain that on occasion there is bravado or high jinks, but there are also other factors, not least the age of the aircraft and the fact that pilots are not always experienced and competent to operate these planes safely at low altitudes," he says.

The League has already suc-

ceeded in restricting training flights over the Isle of Man by aircraft using bombing ranges in the north Irish Sea to 2,000ft and is now calling on the Defence Minister, George Robertson, to impose a 1,000ft restriction on Wales and other low-flying areas in Britain.

The RAF points out that because of cuts to the air fleet there has been a 30 per cent reduction in low-level training exercises since the end of the cold war. Nevertheless, it continues to be an essential part of a pilot's tactical training. "If we want to have the ability to take out enemy targets on the ground and defend ourselves against the possibility of enemy attack there is no alternative but to continue low-level training flights," said an RAF



An Italian soldier inspects the wreckage of the cable car in which 20 skiers fell to their deaths in Cavalese on Tuesday

spokesman. "The danger is that if we stop teaching these techniques then we will not be able to re-learn them when we need to."

Clearly, this is a debate that will run. But perhaps the last word for the moment belongs to Captain Richard Ashby, the American Prowler pilot who this week was coming to terms with the awful possibility that he may be responsible for the death of 20 innocent civilians.

According to Ashby the wires "just suddenly sprang up in front of our eyes. I did everything I could to avoid the cable. I swerved to the left. I hit it with the right wing and then with part of the tail fin. I thought I was still inside the rules."

How it feels: my training as a G-junkie

What does it feel like to fly very fast and very fast? Alex Kershaw: I once had the opportunity to find out. An old schoolfriend was gaining his wings after completing the RAF's rigorous training programme. Did I want to see him and his fellow pilots graduate? At the very least, I'd get to fly at 250ft above Snowdonia in a Hawk jet.

My friend and his fellow pilots were based at RAF Valley in Anglesey. After watching an Air-Vice Marshal pin a pair of wings on my friend's chest, I was whisked off to take a medical. A WRAP nurse told me that my seated hip-to-knee length was 675mm (2ft 6in) — 6mm too long for a Hawk's cockpit. Fortunately I would be sitting in the back, which offered a few precious millimetres of extra leg-room. If I sat in the front and had to eject, she informed me, my knee-caps would be sliced off.

Next up, the medical officer: "You'll probably feel very sick, most people do. When you feel ill, try to keep your brain busy. It's having to concentrate so hard that helps pilots. Do some sums in your head."

Had I eaten? Yes. "Good. It helps to fly on a full stomach. Just keep your sickbag handy and if you are sick, do lift up the visor on your helmet and remove the oxygen mask. You don't want to be sick into that. You'll be fine. You won't feel too much G."

But what was this "G", this word that was on all the pilots' lips? G is the force of gravity, and the faster you fly and the tighter you turn, the more G you pull. So if you're pulling 10 G, your body and brain have to cope with the sensation — and the strain — of weighing 10 times as much as normal.

I'd heard about G-junkies, the fly-



Boys with toys... Val Kilmer and Tom Cruise as pilots in Top Gun

boys who love nothing more than having their internal organs drop six inches as they pull high levels of G in max-rate turns and dives. The men in their early twenties on my friend's training course talked of G as if it were some wonderful elixir, the very reason for flying.

At high levels of G, ordinary mortals will begin to "grey out", usually at about 4G. Stars will appear before the eyes, as if one had stood up too quickly. Next comes the blackout. Then, if you're flying a jet at low level, you'll be dead. "One way to stop G affecting you too much is to pretend you're on the toilet," I was advised. "Squeeze and strain. That'll get the blood back to your head."

Do young flyers feel the need to push themselves and their hi-tech planes further to increase the fix? "Sure, you want to push it," one young pilot admitted. "What pilot doesn't? But there's a massive difference between pushing it and breaking the rules. It's not like driving a car for kicks. There are very clear safety limits we always work

within. Besides, you don't take risks in the RAF if you want to stay around. The secret to what we do is being able to process a huge amount of information and do a lot of things at once. When you're going so fast at low level, you have to think way ahead, anticipate events. Some guys can't perform all the calculations and fly the plane at the same time."

Helmet in hand, I walked towards a red-and-white Hawk. I was strapped in and then the canopy was closed. My pilot checked that I had put my ejector seat pins in the correct holes.

He opened the engine to full power and then released the seat by the force of the acceleration. Seconds later, we were airborne. Anglesey mapped out the cockpit was. I couldn't make out the 5,200lbs of thrust from the Rolls-Royce engine, just my heart pounding and my deep breaths through the oxygen mask. As we turned towards central Wales, the

first wave of nausea swamped me. I'd been doing long division in my head since we took off. Now I began taking irregular breaths of a 15 per cent oxygen-air mix. Sweat streamed down my forehead into my eyes. The pilot chatted away nonchalantly and turned up the air conditioning. I pulled out two sick-bags from my thigh map pocket and began to pray.

Five minutes later, we approached the A5 road — "a real corker of a turn" according to one of the pilots. Mount Snowdon disappeared behind us. I spotted a few ramblers walking above us as we dipped down and followed the A5 at around 250ft as it meandered through a long valley. Now my palms were dissolving into sweat.

"We'll take a right," the pilot said breezily. "You'll feel about 4G, but it won't last too long and then we'll drop quite quickly."

We approached a blind corner where the A5 veered to the right. All I could see was a mountainside approaching fast. "Jesus, we're going to hit the mountain," I screamed as I closed my eyes. I opened them a split-second later to a blaze of green and rock. The next thing I knew, we were almost upside down, 250ft above the ground. I felt dizzy, light-headed, disorientated, as if every inch of my body was being compressed. I began to grey out. But then I remembered to strain and squeeze. I grunted and my head cleared. As we pulled out of the turn and gained altitude I began to relax. I had left my stomach a mile and a few seconds back on the A5. While I waited for *Into* catch up, I revelled in a sudden high. I'd had my first fix of G. Of course, like every new-born G-junkie, I was dying for more.

©Alex Kershaw

He was the bad knight of the rightwing press. Then love changed his heart and his mind

The merrying of Perry



INTERVIEW BY SABINE BAKER

The rightwing polemicist and former editor of the Sunday Telegraph, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, last week denounced racism. "Goodness, I thought, I used to think like that," he wrote in the Daily Telegraph. "But, instead of revelling in this latest example of political correctness, I found to my surprise that it was sticking in my gullet. Worse, making me feel sick."

Can this be the same Worsthorne who has, in the past, argued so intricately against "coloured" immigration, who has brought the weight of his intellect to bear in favour of white minority rule in southern Africa who, for 40 years in journalism, has been unafraid to deliver the most eccentrically rightwing views in Britain, the high priest of good old British prejudice? The same Worsthorne who usually holds the phrase "political correctness" in inverted commas, like tweezers, as if keeping it away from his nose? What can be going on?

"Oh dear," says the same Worsthorne, "perhaps it's age. He is sitting in a beautiful Gothic conservatory attached to the Old Rectory in Hedgerley, 'The Best Kept Village in Buckinghamshire', an elderly gentleman of 74 in a brown corduroy suit with a thinning cloud of white hair on his head. His pink shirt is threadbare along the collar and there are a couple of small nicks on his chin and a few grey wispy missed hairs above his upper lip. For a while, the zip on his trousers is undone. "Thank you. Thank you. *Auf Wiedersehen*," he says, alerted before his photograph is taken.



Sir Peregrine Worsthorne... I've only ever been nasty when threatened or in competition or in difficulties and that tends to happen much less frequently now

PHOTOGRAPH BY EMONN MACARE

A drink? Have a drink? Lunch. Have some lunch," he says at intervals. At one point, after denouncing his Belgian ancestry, he discovers that his interviewer has Belgian blood. "But I'm enormously Belgian," he enthuses. At another, when asked the name of his stepson's band, which is big in Spain, he looks quite stumped with (relished) embarrassment. "Oh dear... I hesitate... before your tender ears. They're called 'The Pleasure Puckers'. But I believe it sounds better in Spanish."

It was reading Doris Lessing's autobiography that made him realise he had left some of his formerly entrenched views behind. "She described how she suddenly realised she was no longer a socialist, and all the assumptions she had made most of her life she no longer thought," he says. He has a very upper-class accent, part clipped, part drawled. "And I too had begun to be aware of how my feelings had changed. I used to be like Taki still is. I rather made a point of being politically incorrect, like referring to blacks as *Sambo* or something like that. And then reading Taki I realised I felt shocked."

"The point really is that we had been brought up, my generation, to believe that black people are... I won't say inferior because... we would realise it is offensive. But I mean that he is assumed to be stupid until he proves himself clever and the Jews, of course, even in the worst days of anti-Semitism, were assumed to be clever until they proved themselves stupid."

"I can't get it altogether out of my system and I'm now aware how terrible it must be for blacks to feel this and, even if white people take the trouble to disguise it, which they never did before, it's still there. I don't stop feeling it. I simply realise I've really become very much more sensitive to how awful it must be to be black. It's really a handicap."

He pauses, slumping, his neck disappearing into his collar, his hands gripping the arms of the chair, his eyes half closed. Dogs bark somewhere else in the house, the sun dapples down on to a rabbit-shaped topiary on the lawn outside. "Women have a bit to complain about and homosexuals have a lot

to complain about," he continues. "I do find myself slightly shocked when people write about homosexuals as if they were monsters. I do find that shocking, though I've done a bit of that myself also. I've written a piece recanting my homophobia too."

He says he has got bored of writing in defence of hereditary privilege, that he is drawn to "the intriguing ideas that can be made to undermine the Conservative position" simply to give himself "something fresh to write about". He also says that he finds himself in a difficult position politically. "It is all very confusing when you realise that Mrs Thatcher has done much more to change Britain in ways you don't approve of than the Labour Party. And of course now Blair is more Conservative in the way that I've always been than probably William Hague. Blair's Labour Party is the best of the possible worlds available."

It is also almost exactly a year since Worsthorne was sacked by Dominic Lawson, as weekly columnist on the Sunday Telegraph, the paper he edited from 1986-1989, "in disgraceful, from my way of looking at it, circumstances". There was a history of bickering between the two men and Lawson perhaps relished the deed, delivered via an abrupt fax, more than he should have done. "It was personal so I was angry," says Worsthorne.

'If I had been a miner's son in the 1930s, no doubt I would have taken a very different view'

The sacking was he claims, "a watershed". "I was the underdog victim if you like. Maybe that made me more radical. People always look, when they write biographies, for the radicalising circumstances, so conceivably my change can be blamed on, or credited to, Dominic Lawson."

He hasn't spoken to Lawson since — "and I don't intend to" — but he and his second wife, the effervescent writer and broadcaster Lucinda Lambton, occasionally see him across a room. "She makes faces at him and he gets embarrassed and of course she has been known to strike her enemies or spit at them. She hasn't done that yet. I wouldn't mind if she did, but she hasn't."

What is most striking about talking to Worsthorne, partly because it is a subject that interests him as a historian, is how his character and beliefs have been carved out of his own experience. He claims his belief in a governing elite was formed by the example of his stepfather, Montagu Norman, former governor of the Bank of England. "Enormously busy and a great man... My formative years were spent in the roof of somebody who was at the heart of the establishment and I was enormously impressed by the sense of public service... that did play a part in shaping my Conservative beliefs and becoming a defender of the

status quo. If I had been a miner's son in unemployment in the 1930s, and seen the depression in all its grimness, no doubt I would have taken a very different view."

But you wonder too, what attitudes were implanted in him by the fact that he didn't see his father, a member of the "idle rich" who emigrated to Rhodesia and remarried several times, from the age of four until his mid-twenties, that his mother was "austere" and that the only words his top-hatted stepfather ever said to him or his brother were: "Had enough grub boys?" — "that was the limit of our intimacy". (Norman's biographer, Andrew Boyle, incidentally, writes that his stepsons "had always been a trial to him").

One wonders too what may be behind his outspoken antagonism to the "permissive society". (He now envisages, more resigned than angry, that it won't be long before paedophilia is accepted; he thinks that for Clinton, sexual activity is not different to "an itch", or "going for a pee"). It's particularly interesting that he is still so offended by homosexuals who "thrust the activity under one's nose in an almost provocatively brazen way," while also admitting to his own past homosexual experiences at Stowe (where he either seduced or was seduced by George Melly) and at Cambridge.

In his autobiography, *Tricks Of*

Memory, he treads carefully around the sexual nature of one particular friendship, but he says now that it was "a very passionate homosexual affair". It might not have ended there. "There was a very strong group, attractive, clever, a very elegant life... The homosexual world was made very attractive and it was touch and go whether one was drawn into it. But of course it was forbidden so as soon as you left university you got into the heterosexual world."

He has married twice. His first wife, with whom he had a daughter, died of cancer in 1980. He began his autobiography then. "My idea was to spend time remembering the past, for want of very much to hope for in the future." But eight months later, he had met Lady Lucinda Lambton and began a second "idyllic life". Much of his gradual softening may well be down to her. (It was, ironically, in defence of her father, Lord Lambton, that he shocked the nation in the early seventies by saying, "I don't think anybody gives a fuck," on Nationwide, delaying his promotion in the Telegraph, some say by several years.)

She has opened his eyes, he says. "Lucy has enormous passionate enthusiasms and visual enthusiasms, looking at things. Before, I was non-visual, not noticing houses, gardens, trees. I use my eyes now much more. I see."

The house, which was hers when he met her, is a Bohemian trove of lovely furniture and rugs and painted walls. People who come to the house smoke marijuana, though he doesn't. (His luxury on Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* was LSD but he still hasn't dared try it.)

But now there is also his ageing to think about. Does he mind getting older? (He's vain enough to model for Boden's mail-order catalogue.) "In every period in one's life there are consolations but I do mind and dread the decline of powers that comes with old age. I do mind. There are consolations. You can walk slowly uphill and instead of saying, 'I'm lazy', you can say, 'I'm 74. I can't be expected to...'. And you can decline to get up in the morning when you have a hangover and say 'At my age I deserve a day in bed'."

"And I am nicer now. I suppose I've always found it easy to be nice as most people see. I've been nasty when threatened or in competition or in difficulties in my professional or private life and that tends to happen much less frequently now." He pauses. "Oh, and you can afford to say what you think because people put it down to old age."

He crosses his legs and, for the first time, I see that under his sober corduroy suit, he's wearing a pair of bright red-and-green striped woolen socks.



Help the aged when the admen arrive

SEEM to be almost alone in being genuinely shocked by the new Age Concern poster which shows 56-year-old Pearl Read in a Wonderbra, and carries the message: "The first thing some people notice is her age." Oh, it's an adman's dream, since it's attracted lots of attention and I'm sure other admen will give it stacks of admen's awards. The message is not hard to deconstruct. It isn't: "Employ older people. They are experienced, wise and reliable," but, "Middle-aged women. Some of them still have great tits."

Imagine the outcry if other pressure groups used the same tactic. The Campaign for Racial Equality could show a beautiful black girl: "Keep your mind open and her legs might be too" or the disability lobby could depict a gorgeous woman in a wheelchair: "She may not be mobile, but she can still suck the cap off a lava lamp." People would be rightly appalled. But the principle seems to me exactly the same.

I ALSO felt sorry for Britain's young jazz musicians the other day. I passed their coach in Trafalgar Square. It said on the side: "National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Sponsored by UNISON. Britain's grooviest union." How it cracks! Has anyone else used the word "groovy" since 1971?

THERE'S something deeply depressing about the honorary knighthood awarded to Bob Hope. In fact, there's something deeply depressing about Bob Hope. Some of the old Road films were quite funny, but he hasn't cracked a real joke since, I'd guess, 1962 when everyone was disappointed by *The Road to Hong Kong*. When I lived in the States, I noticed with gloom how every national occasion, from the Superbowl to a presidential inauguration, had to be accompanied by Bob Hope, or, failing that, a Tribute To Bob Hope. The man himself would appear looking insufferably smug. If he did utter a word, it would be an unfunny gag, possibly written by a rightwing computer.

Here are two from the Bush-Dukakis campaign: "We can't let Greeks in the White House, they'd smash all that china!" and "Dukakis? It sounds like something you step in!" These are the equivalent of alcohol-free beer, humour-free jokes. It just shows, I fear, that any old riff-raff can have a knighthood now.

WE had a lovely time last weekend, staying in West Sussex. Chichester Cathedral was worth the trip alone, with its Chagall stained glass and the celebrated Arundel tomb, the inspiration for one of Larkin's finest poems. In another small market town, I found an odd thing. Jostling against the Boots and Dewhursts and those nice old men's outfitters which sell mud-coloured shirts and tweed jackets in shades of bracken, was a small shop with a clever-clever name, which sold only objects designed to calm you down.

I had no idea there was so much of this merchandise available. Obviously, I knew you could buy

wind chimes and books like *Chicken Soup For The Soul* or the *Little Book Of Calm*, last year's second-best-seller, full of advice so useless it would drive any sane person into a gibbering rage. But there are also bottles of "stress-release massage oil", and those CDs of woodland sounds, the dawn chorus and waterfalls in the rain.

We'll all know things have improved when there are shops selling things to wind us all up

forest (though how you can be sure it's not water trickling through a sewage farm, I don't know). One of them was called *Peaceful Pachelbel*, a dainty arrangement of the ubiquitous Canon, doubly soporific, like pulling two duvets over your head. There was even a children's book called *Herbert The Harmonious Hippo*.

It's sad that we are now so angst-

ridden that we have to have high-street shops devoted to soothing us. We'll know things have improved when there are shops selling things to wind us all up. Bottles of Carsiberg special, perhaps, extra-strength caffeine tablets to make you anxious, and books with titles like *Kick 'Em While They're Down: A Guide To Modern Business Ethics*.

I WAS sad to see that the daughter of a Tory MP has allegedly been working as a high-class call girl. If it's true, it must be demeaning for her, and dreadfully distressing for them. I was reminded of a surprising conversation I had a year or so ago with a young woman who was a press officer for a very well-known company. She told me that they were seeking a lot of people and that she feared for her job. If she lost it, she said, she would have to consider the example of a university friend who had set up as a prostitute in one of the nicer parts of south London.

Rather than have a pimp, she worked through an "agency",

which vetted all the clients, mostly well-to-do businessmen and a few Arabs. They paid £300-400 a time, half of which went to the agency. This meant that she earned more than twice as much as most secretaries, and worked for little more than an hour each day. The rest of the time was her own. Her only fear, she told my companion, was that her parents might find out.

Well, the young woman who told me this story wasn't fired, but left for a better job later. I'm happy to say I don't know about her friend. But it seems to me an inevitable process in the New Britain. Young, educated middle-class women want work, and these days often can't find it. As the gap grows between the mega-rich and the rest of us, there will be lots of middle-aged men with far more money than they can spend wanting to have sex with girls young enough, and nicely spoken enough, to be their daughters. Instead of the tart with the heart of gold, the cliché will be the trollop with a decent degree.

Force of reason

HEAD TO HEAD: SHOULD WE GO TO WAR WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN?



Yes
Col Mike Dewar
Military expert



No
Tam Dalyell
Labour MP for
Linlithgow

Dear Col Mike Dewar,

Paid for by myself and beholden to nobody, I went to Baghdad, Basra, Umqasr, Kut and Kerbala in 1991. I was taken on the first morning in Baghdad to the Amariya, the shelter in which 500 women and children were incarcerated — there is no other word for it — by a Cruise missile. Carbonated arms, legs and torsos were impregnated into the destroyed concrete. The experience was as powerful as the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

People who are attacked in this way have their anger directed at those who dispatched the bombs. Nothing consolidates the power of Saddam more than bombs dispatched by high-technology countries, or sanctions.

Do you remember the massacre at Dunblane Primary School? Does not something of the same sympathy extend to the undernourished children of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys? All right, there is uncertain information about terrible chemical weapons. But let's be practical — how do we find these installations and what happens if we do find them?

I asked defence ministers what tests they had carried out on the dangers to humans resulting from the bombing of the installations containing anthrax spores, botulin toxins and E. coli. The official answer from John Chisholm, head of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency, said that "no specific field trials have been carried out to look at the subject". What on earth do those who demand aerial bombardment want to achieve?

Yours sincerely,
Tam Dalyell
Labour MP for Linlithgow

Dear Tam Dalyell,
Thank you for your letter regarding the terrible aftermath of the Amariya shelter bombing. It was a ghastly event in which many innocent civilians died, but an inevitable consequence of warfare, by definition both ghastly and unpredictable. It was amazing and a tribute to the extraordinary efforts of the allies to avoid this sort of tragedy — that there were not a dozen such incidents.

But the Amariya tragedy, and even more so Dunblane, are entirely irrelevant to the debate on whether or not force should be used now to persuade Saddam to abide by the terms of UN Resolution 687 on weapons of mass destruction.

If you are saying there is a risk that innocent people might get hurt, then of course you are right. That is the unfortunate nature of warfare, though everything humanly possible will be done to minimise this risk. The real question is what is the least bad way of ensuring that Saddam ceases to manufacture weapons of mass destruction that threaten the peace of the Middle East and the credibility of the UN. If diplomacy fails, there is no other alternative but the use of force. It does not guarantee success, but to do nothing would constitute a major danger. History shows that appeasing dictators does not work.

Yours sincerely,
Col Mike Dewar
Editor, The Officer

Dear Mike,
You are right. One of the inevitable consequences of warfare always has been injury to the innocent. But you say that the military destruction is the least bad way. Is there not a less bad way that at least should be tried? Such as lifting sanctions forthwith. If this were done, I believe the UN would be free to roam wherever they please. Once one starts demolishing a particular government, defining it as Absolute Evil, it is then an easy matter to persuade ourselves that it is legitimate to use absolute means against them.

From my meeting with Tariq Aziz and other Iraqi ministers, my judgment is that they are able men desperate that sanctions should be lifted and dignified relations restored. Mike, you talk about "threatening the peace of the Middle East". Why are the Saudis so reluctant? The Bahrainis? And, when my wife and I were on holiday in Iran in October, people who loathe Saddam did not want to see an attack. The neighbours most at risk simply don't agree with you that to do nothing would endanger peace.

As to the credibility of the UN — that would be undermined by a military consort against the wishes of



Casualties of war... an Iraqi woman nurses her wounded child in Baghdad in 1991

Yeltsin, Chirac and the Chinese.
Yours sincerely,
Tam

Dear Tam,
Actually, we're not a million miles apart. I too visit the Gulf region regularly and have the firm impression that, although the arcane politics of the region prevent Saudi and other smaller states declaring open support for the US and Britain, they will not complain if offensive military action is the catalyst for the removal of Saddam.

This is not the declared aim of military action. But any campaign will be designed to encourage the Marsh Arabs in the south and the Kurds in the north in particular to rise against Saddam without suffering the retribution they did in 1991. I do not know whether lifting sanctions would allow the UN inspectors to "roam wherever they please". I doubt it very much. Much more likely is that Saddam would have his cake and eat it.

The civilised world has tried everything with this man — "dignified relations", diplomacy, cajoling, striking bargains, open warfare — and every time he has double-crossed. The West, his fellow Arabs, the UN, all know how that feels, as do his own people who he has bombed with nerve gas and murdered in their thousands. While it would be foolish to characterise Saddam or his government as "absolute evil", both are as close to this description as one can imagine.

I would love to think that lifting sanctions is the answer. Sadly, it would only give him the breathing space to build up his strength.

For the sake of the Iraqis, we must have the courage to face this man down and free Iraq of one of the most unpleasant regimes this century has seen.

Yours sincerely,
Mike

Dear Mike,
I've never been to Kurdistan, but I met the Iraqi health minister, Aunaid Madhat Mubarak, a decent medical doctor and Kurd who is an important figure in the government. I also met Kurdish members when I addressed the Iraqi parliament in 1994, no more of a rubber stamp on the executive than the House of Commons these days. They laughed when I said the Kurds were as difficult as the Irish.

I also went to the Marshes and to Querna. I expressed a desire to see those extraordinary straw edifices where the Marsh Arabs live; no notice was given. The leaders were hospitable and treated our Ba'ath party guides as they would popular local councillors in West Lothian. I don't believe the Marsh Arabs would rise against the regime. Certainly there was great bloodiness in Kerbala in 1991. But I was persuaded that a lot of the (preserved) signs of blood was of Ba'ath members who had been murdered by those tempted to rise up by the Americans. I doubt if

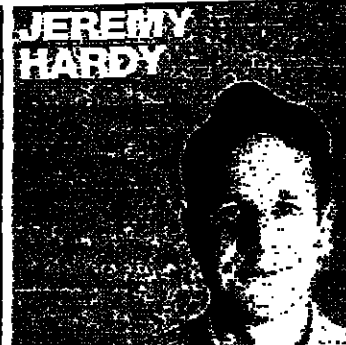
after seven years of sanctions people in Iraq are going to rise up at the instigation of the Anglo-Americans again.

Yours sincerely,
Tam

Dear Tam,
You make a single substantive point in your last letter: that the Marsh Arabs are unlikely to rise again against Saddam. Unlike you I have not been to Southern Iraq and seen the Marsh Arabs in their homeland, but there is incontrovertible evidence that they rose in 1991 against Saddam and were brutally repressed. You may be right that they may not be inclined to try it again. However, no one has any doubts about the Kurds in the north, who are already in a state of rebellion, and there is at least an outside chance that the Marsh Arabs who have rebelled once will follow their example.

The main point, is how best to prevent Saddam manufacturing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, which he has been doing continually since the mid-1980s. Unless faced with the threat or use of military force, he will continue to duck and dive, to bluff and bully to threaten his neighbours and to keep his country in misery. We have all seen his type before. The world would be a better place if his ilk listened to sweet reason. I too wish it were so.

Yours sincerely,
Mike Dewar



Jeremy Hardy
If his face fits, put him in the slammer

IT'S more than six years since Winston Silcott was cleared of the murder of PC Keith Blacklock, and yet it appears that he is still serving a life sentence for it. He remains in jail for the killing of Anthony Smith, a gangster who, armed with a knife and backed up by two henchmen, attacked Winston and was injured in the fight that followed, dying a week later. Winston was convicted of his murder in February 1996. It is hard to believe that he would still be in jail if he were not being punished for something else.

There is mounting evidence that Winston acted in self-defence and that he gave this account of events to his legal team. Notes taken by a barrister's pupil show Winston saying that he was handed a knife to protect himself. At trial, he denied having a knife or stabbing Smith, even though Smith had clearly attacked him and sustained stab wounds. A statement has been made by another barrister who was asked to take the case to appeal. He says that the solicitors' clerk who had prepared the defence case for trial admitted to him that Winston should have been advised to plead self-defence.

In 1987, Lord Lane refused leave to appeal against the conviction, immediately after the hearing in which he had rejected Winston's appeal against the Blacklock conviction. Lane's view was that, if Winston lied at the Smith trial, it was his own fault and nothing could be done about it.

New material obtained subsequent to those appeal proceedings includes three eye-witness accounts which confirm that Smith attacked Winston; and a statement from the principal prosecution witness at the trial, who states that, if she had been asked whether it appeared that Winston was defending himself, she would have said that he clearly was.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that Winston should have pleaded self-defence. It was never disputed that Smith was the aggressor; his knife was found among his clothes and there were plenty of witnesses. For Winston to pretend to have had nothing to do with Smith's injuries seems crazy. The only explanation for the strategy can be that he was already becoming famous as "The Beast of Broadwater Farm".

Winston was on bail charged with the murder of Smith, when Cynthia Jarrett suffered a fatal heart attack during a police raid at her home on October 5, 1985. A march on Tottenham police station was prevented by the police effectively sealing off the Broadwater Farm Estate, where relations with the community had become extremely strained. The situation

degenerated into riots, during which PC Keith Blacklock was horribly butchered. He had had nothing to do with Mrs Jarrett's death.

In the days that followed, hundreds of young men and boys were arrested. Six were charged with murder. One of them, Jason Hill, was 13. He was kept in a cell for three days and interrogated in his underpants. At trial, the judge rubbished his confession, condemned his interrogation and ordered his acquittal. Two other juveniles were also acquitted, but Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott were convicted.

The evidence was scant to say the least. Braithwaite confessed to hitting a policeman with an iron bar. This was not consistent with PC Blacklock's injuries. Raghip, a suggestive young man of low intelligence, was interrogated for 12 hours, during which, he says, threats were made against his wife and son. He confessed merely to having been in the crowd. Winston, unpopular with police as a member of the local Youth Association and Haringey Police Committee, did not confess to anything, nor sign interview notes. The court had to rely on officers reading out unsigned notes and describing what Roy Amlott QC summed up as a "guilty posture". Later, forensic tests on the notes showed that important sections were added after the interview. The convictions of all three men were quashed in November 1991.

So what does all this have to do with Anthony Smith? When Winston came to trial in that case, he was already known as a suspect in the Blacklock case. Unusually for a case about a fight in which the man killed was the aggressor, witnesses

It is hard to believe that Winston Silcott would still be in jail if he were not being punished for something else

and jurors were all given police protection, and the court was ringed with armed police. One would normally see this kind of thing in a terrorist case and it cannot have failed to impress the jury.

Winston and his lawyers are likely to have been preoccupied by the upcoming trial for the Broadwater Farm killing. I presume that they thought he had a good chance of convincing a jury that he had injured Smith in self-defence. None of the evidence backing this version of events was used and instead he lied about injuring Smith.

Last November, the Criminal Cases Review Commission announced that it was minded to withdraw application to return this case to the Court of Appeal. The Commission's view was that the two cases are unrelated. This new quango is usurping the legal process and announcing its own verdicts, instead of doing what it was created to do — assess whether there is sufficient evidence for cases to go back to court.

It is therefore timely that an excellent book about Winston is published this week. It is entitled *A Chronology Of Injustice* and has been compiled by Legal Action for Women, who have been offering much-needed support to Winston's mother, Mary, for some years. Mary and Bernie Grant MP are launching the book in the Jubilee Room at the House of Commons at 5pm on Thursday and copies can be ordered directly by ringing 0171-482 2496.

Bulgaria in Crisis

Emergency Appeal to Guardian Readers

LEFT TO FREEZE
Children like Yordan, 16, already malnourished could die from cold and hunger this January unless aid reaches them now. With temperatures plummeting to -15° Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.



Cold weather alert

No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Now thousands of children are suffering terribly as winter reaches its coldest point. Urgent help is needed. There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need.

Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

£23 could buy enough emergency food packs to feed 20 orphanage children for a week or heat an orphanage for 3 days.

Please send whatever you can to help children survive the winter or call 01273 299399 NOW

I enclose £ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust. Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card

Card no _____ Expiry date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone no. _____

Return to: Tanya Barron, (Glc), Bulgaria Emergency Appeal, The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST KE8399, 644 Queen Street, LONDON, EC4R 4AR or call 01273 299399 NOW. Registered Charity No. 803070

Please act NOW - winter is here

SMALLWEED



THE time has come for Smallweed to fulfil his New Year promise to set out in plain terms why everyone should have heard of the mathematician J J Sylvester, though in fact not everyone has. It is easy to see from the literature that Sylvester was a very great man. It is very much harder for one with as feeble a grasp of maths as Smallweed's to explain why he merits that tribute. Sylvester changed the study of mathematics irrevocably, both by his own intuitions and theories and by the inspiration with which he infected students and successors.

He was one of the founding fathers (I hope I have got this right) of invariant algebra, and, though best known for his work in pure mathematics, was influential in applied mathematics too. Someone has kindly

sent me a copy of the newsletter of the British Society for the History of Mathematics which reports the commemoration last March, at the Balls Pond Road Cemetery, London N1 (where he is buried) and elsewhere, of the 100th anniversary of Sylvester's death.

From this, I learn that he worked on perturbation theory, determinant theory (now termed spectral theory) and the dynamics of couples, which, I take it, does not relate to the work of groups like Relate. He also gave to the language a galaxy of new terms, including matrix, graph, nullity, covariant, invariant, contravariant and catelectant. That reflected his zest for words as well as for numbers. In 1870, he published a book called *The Laws Of Verse*, an attempt to explain, from his own writings and those of others, the principles of phonetic syczygy. And he once wrote an epic poem of 400 lines, 399 of which rhymed with "Rosaland".

PROPOSED a fortnight ago that Wimbledon FC should recruit an entire team of football Hugheses. Had the club taken my advice straight away it could have achieved this objective in a good deal more cheaply than it would do today. While the value of Michael Hughes, whom Wimbledon have

already, has just been upgraded by £1 million in the Times's Fantasy Football League, the purchase price of Hugheses as yet unbought has been rising too.

Bryan Hughes of Birmingham, for example, scored both City goals as they knocked Stockport County out of the Cup. In Arsenal's 2-1 defeat of Chelsea, two goals were scored by Hugheses, one of whom, Stephen of Arsenal, has since been compared to Pavarotti by Melvyn Hughes (Old Ovidians) and Ted Hughes (And Ovidians) have won the Whitbread! Is there any other better place for people? (I still need a substitute goalkeeper though.)

SOME swear by Keith Flett of Mitchley Road, Tottenham and others by Walter Cairns of Wilmslow Road, Manchester, but what makes Smallweed's day is to find a letter in the correspondence columns signed by Sierra Hutton-Wilson of Priory Cottage, Evercreech, Somerset. Somehow, the address compounds the pleasure which comes from the offbeat name.

Hutton-Wilson has sent letters to the editor over the years on a multiplicity of subjects, from the National Lottery to the battle of the Somme, the strains imposed on Catholic priests by the requirement of celibacy, the effect of traffic humps on the

generation of road rage, and garlic. In the Guardian on Monday, she ingeniously suggested to Tony Blair that Alan Clark should replace Robin Cook as foreign secretary. In the Times on Wednesday, a further letter from Evercreech suggested that a trap has been set in the Middle East — but whether this was an Arabic trap into which Saddam had blundered, or the other way round, remained unclear. Mysteriously, this was signed: AMS Hutton-Wilson. But I bet it was our Sierra.

HAVE a confession to make. I can't stand pieces which begin with the words: "I have a confession to make", especially when the confession turns out to be some hunk of mock modesty. At least Michael Fortille, who used it the other day when reviewing a novel by Michael Dobbs, had a real confession to make — that, although Dobbs, a friend, always sent him his books, he didn't get round to reading them.

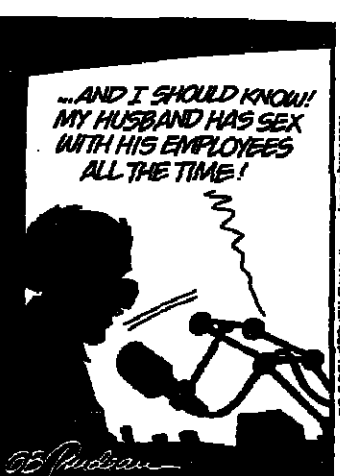
But: "I have a confession to make. I am a friend of Jeremy Isaacs" (Stewart Stevens, Mail on Sunday); or: "Today I have a confession to make. Although I have a job I love that pays a good salary, a mortgage and one of those nippy little cars you see in TV commercials, I've never known the correct way to take off a coat" (Natalie Clarke, Daily Mail). Have that awful snack of self-advertisement which convinces Smallweed that any nanny state worth the name would ban this practice forthwith, if not before.

WHILE crossing a road in Sunderland some 10 or so years ago, I remember being struck... Flat Lux (Stourbridge) writes: What is syczygy when it's at home?

Smallweed omnisciently replies: Nowadays, it's the name of a website builder. (Pronounced sizzery, by the way.) In Sylvester's day, however, when they didn't have websites, it meant a yoking together, a union, a conjunction, even a copulation; and thus it says here, by extension, "the conjunction or opposition of heavenly bodies". It can also mean a dipody. According to an elderly dictionary, it was further laid down... by Sylvester himself, I am happy to say — that "the members of any group of functions, more than two in number, whose nullity is implied in the relation of double contact, must be in syczygy".

Flat Lux (Stourbridge) writes: What's a dipody? Smallweed sternly ordains: That is quite enough. You'll be asking me next: What is copulation? Kindly look it up for yourself.

Doonesbury



THE BEST OF MY WEEK

— SAYS CAPTAIN BIRD'S EYE, JOHN HEWITT: "Was learning that when the news of my retirement as Captain Bird's Eye came out, many people expressed disappointment at not seeing the 'old' captain again. True, I am an 'old' captain but in the early commercials, these kind people might be surprised to see me, with brown hair and beard, leaping up ladders and on and off boats like the 14-year-old I was! They saw how one can grow into a part but this part 'grew' into me. My love to all 'my' kids."

John 1:150

Beauty is a dangerous business. **Susannah Frankel** talks to a catwalk star who is sick of its horrors

The fashion of destruction



Emma Balfour... 'Girls are going to get into trouble. Shit is going to happen'

PHOTOGRAPH BY NEPA MATTHEWS

Next Tuesday night, in front of a television audience of millions, model Emma Balfour, who has worked for everyone from Calvin Klein to Versace, will announce that she is tired of modelling. She is sick, she says, of the hypocrisy inherent in certain aspects of the fashion industry and of the victimisation of young women in particular. And that's not all. In every catwalk show she took part in last season (that's most of them, incidentally), she says there were several women whom she knew to be ill, as a result of the effects of heroin abuse or anorexia, while those around them seemed to turn a blind eye.

We've heard these stories of drug abuse and eating disorders many times before. But rarely has someone so central to the fashion industry felt compelled to speak out about its unpleasant side.

"I've been modelling for so long," Balfour says, when we meet at her agent's office in London, "and maybe I was just more naive before. But this season I found it more disturbing than I have done. I'm 27 now, and seeing all these young kids going on benders, it just didn't seem right, it didn't seem like anyone was looking after them."

In an industry which thrives on creating glossy images and selling a glamorous lifestyle, this is unusual language. Unusually brave, perhaps. So what has encouraged her to speak out? She says she was compelled by the realisation that, although rumours abound, nothing is done to address the problem of individual sufferers.

"It bugs me that it's been rumoured for quite a long time that various people are suffering from various illnesses or addictions, but it's all just gossip. All these girls are being gossiped about but no one ever stands up and says, 'Hang on a minute, they're dying.' It's just like 'Oh, so and so's been in rehab, and you see all these girls working and you're not really sure if they're well again."

"I'm not saying it happens in every show but certainly enough to make me notice it more than I ever have before. You know, it's a bunch of kids being thrown into a pretty weird world and we all deal with it in our own ways."

"I think heroin is about being part of an elite gang. It makes you feel important. Maybe if your work isn't going brilliantly you can associate with someone else who is doing it; they can look after you. But once they get to the level where they look like they've got jaundice and are quite obviously not well..."

The image of a young woman being heavily made up to disguise signs of serious illness, then sent down a catwalk, is a disturbing one. But the fact that drug abuse is endemic in the fashion industry perhaps should not surprise us. The twice-yearly show circuit, in particular, is a strange and unnatural world. Young women, of school-leaving age, and increasingly younger still, are thrown into an environment far more sophisticated than they are — from the kinds of clothes they are asked to wear to the photographers, agents and general hang-

ers-on they work and party with. Equally significantly, these women are, before they have even set foot on the catwalk, genetic wonders — thinner, taller and more beautiful than the rest of us. They are, therefore, if only because of their physical appearance, intrinsically more vulnerable than most. And looks alone are not enough to ensure success. Models are also required to offer an indefinable something other — call it sex appeal, attitude, instinct, edge, whatever.

"Anything in which you are judged purely on the way you look is odd," Balfour says. "Of course, there are girls who are fantastic models and their careers rocket. But when you're just pretty there are a lot of things that they ask you to be that you're not."

Emma Balfour was born in a small town in Australia, which means, she says, that she was allowed to enter into modelling at a more gradual, less dangerous pace than many — Australia is hardly fashion central. "I started when I was 17," she says, "and I was really scared. For a long time people tried to make me sexy and that just wasn't something I could be. I was very shy and it would have been very easy for me to get caught up in things as a way of escaping people's expectations of me. That's why a lot of young girls fall into stuff."

"I moved to Sydney and, for the first two years, I hated it passionately because I was so shy. But I kept on modelling because it paid the rent and I only had to work once a week. I could afford to go out to dinner once in a while."

All these girls are being gossiped about, but no one ever says, 'Hang on a minute, they're dying'

The fact that the industry — from the models themselves, to their agents, stylists, photographers and fashion designers — is reluctant to talk about any drug problems is predictable. Models are a valuable commodity. Increased competition between agencies to find the Next Big Thing means that it pays to keep the young women on their books happy. Most big-name agencies, in this country in particular, will by all accounts protect their "girls". But others, especially in America where the financial stakes are the highest in the world, are less likely to.

Then there's the fact that the fashion industry, not entirely unreasonably, feels victimised. Why draw attention to drug problems in fashion and not the music industry — or Hollywood for that matter? Drug abuse is, after all, on the increase in young, middle-

class people in all walks of life, not just fashion.

Dr David Best of the National Addiction Centre, who works with Designers Against Addiction, a campaign attempting to combat drug abuse in the fashion industry, says that models are indeed at risk. "These girls are very young and have unusually large quantities of cash at their disposal," he says. "Stimulants are sometimes used to keep them thin and what can happen is they then take heroin, if only in order to sleep or calm down. They are also frequently invited to glamorous parties where they meet all sorts of people."

He goes on to say that models taking heroin may be able to continue working up to a point because they can afford drugs that are of a higher quality. They are also less likely to enter rehabilitation, however, simply because their socio-economic group is less often caught in criminal proceedings taken against them.

Although problems with drug abuse in the fashion industry may, for the most part, be swept under the carpet, occasionally something happens that draws attention to the matter. This time last year, young fashion photographer Davide Sorrenti died of a heroin overdose, which prompted President Clinton to denounce "heroin chic", a perceived genre of photography that included the work of Sorrenti which, he claimed, made drug addiction seem "glamorous, sexy and cool".

Then, at the end of last summer, model Amy Wesson was sued by her then agency, Company Management, which alleges Wesson missed huge amounts of work due to a drug problem. Wesson has denied all allegations and has since moved to another agency. She has, none the less, become fashion's (and the media's in general) favourite scapegoat. A fact, it could be argued, that once again, deflects attention away from the hard realities of the issue as a whole.

Balfour is signed to Storm Model Management, which also has Kate Moss on its books and is the subject of this week's BBC Inside Story documentary. It is, of course, a measure of the confidence of Storm that Balfour's interviews with the Guardian and on television were ever allowed to happen.

Sarah Doukas, Storm's managing director, blames drug abuse on society in general rather than the fashion industry specifically. "Of course you have to be realistic — and these girls are vulnerable. But if I knew someone was taking heroin, I'd make every effort to do something about it. Throwing them off the books is the last thing I'd do."

Balfour agrees that heroin abuse and anorexia are problems that are far from unique to the fashion industry. But she doesn't believe that this should be used as an excuse to shirk responsibility. "Girls are going to get into trouble. Shit is going to happen. It's all about being honest and a bit more realistic about the situation. Everyone's talking about it. Now we have to address it somehow."

Inside Story: Dazzled is on BBC1 at 9.30 pm on Tuesday.

'Smith's line has always been one of jam tomorrow'

Michael Billington explains why the arts world is deeply despondent over Labour's broken promises

What on earth is going on? Is Labour the historic ally of the arts, turning into their deadliest enemy? Each week, each day even, seems to bring news of fresh crises and disasters.

The underfunded, admission-charging V&A reports plummeting attendance. The Bowes Museum in Durham talks of selling off its masterpieces. The 140-year-old Halle Orchestra is brought to the brink of disbandment. Greenwich Theatre, a mile away from the projected Dome in London — closes its doors after the current production. In the opera world, confusion reigns aided by Chris Smith's kite-flying proposal, pre-empting an independent enquiry chaired by Richard Eyre, that ENO and the Royal Opera should share the re-opened Covent Garden on a Box and Cox basis. Meanwhile Sir Peter Hall, the arts world's most articulate spokesman, attacks the Government's "ridiculous" funding policies. How, in nine short months, can the atmosphere have turned so sour?

I suspect there are several reasons. First, there is the assumption that, at national level, the arts always do better under Labour. The oft-derided Wilson government of the 1960s not only boasted a dynamic arts minister in Jennie Lee but sanctioned a huge leap in Treasury funding: the result was a massive eruption of new regional theatres, galleries and arts centres. Even in the austere Callaghan years from 1976 to 1979, Arts Council funding

increased by 20 per cent. After 18 years of Tory indifference, if not downright hostility, to the arts, it was assumed that things would be better under Labour: the shock comes from the numbing realisation that they are not. If anything, they are actually getting worse.

Allied to this is the Labour Government's incomprehensible attitude to public funding. The blunt truth is that the current crisis in the arts is far from being entirely their fault: it has been building over a long time. In 1992-93, government support for the Arts Council stood at £185 million; for 1998-99 the figure stands at £184m. According to the Financial Times, even to maintain the grant, in real terms, at the level of seven years ago would require a subsidy of £212m.

No one expected Labour to repair the injustices of the years overnight. But even a symbolic gesture would have been welcomed. What people cannot stomach is that even the puny investment we make in the arts, which puts us well down the European league table, has been cut back still further. As Sir Peter Hall angrily asked at the South Bank Show Awards, "Why? It saves tuppence."

The feeling I encounter everywhere is that Labour still doesn't get it: that it hasn't grasped that the crisis in the arts is happening now and that solutions can no longer be postponed. Chris Smith apparently told Peter Hall, after their last abrasive TV encounter, "Just be patient. Have faith." And



ILLUSTRATION: STEVE CAPLIN

Smith's line all along has been one of 'jam tomorrow. Wait for the policy review into arts funding. Wait for the National Lottery Bill, which will shift resources from buildings to people. Wait for NESTA (a National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) which will fund new initiatives. But it's a bit like waiting for Godot: an attritional process endlessly based on hope deferred. And even if, miraculously, Chris Smith's Godot does arrive in the shape of new money for the arts, who knows how many more theatres, orchestras, opera companies, museums and galleries will in the interim have gone under?

As Stephen Blackpool says in Dickens's *Hard Times*, "It's a middle." We vaguely want the arts; we just seem to resent paying for them. The problem is exacerbated by the Lottery, which gives the public the illusion the arts are swimming in money. To date, 1,790 Lottery Capital Awards have been made totalling £88m; another 1,351 applications are in the pipeline for more than £743m of Lottery money. Yet, at the time, revenue funding to arts organisations is being cut. But what one leading arts figure called "the curse of the Lottery" operates in other, less obvious, ways too. Once you've got a Lottery grant, you have to raise matching private funding. The Royal Court Theatre is typical of dozens of cases up and down the country in that it is finding it difficult to raise the requisite funds and risks both not being able to move into its new premises on time and also, in the process, losing its temporary West End homes.

People in the arts are not fools; nor are they, as sometimes depicted, whingeing, selfish or financially irresponsible. They know that the Labour

Government faces many other urgent priorities including better health and education provision. What they find hard to accept is the prevailing gulf between reality and rhetoric.

A year ago they applauded loudly when they heard the following: "You can tell societies that are vibrant and energetic and have got something to tell their people by looking at the arts and culture. The arts should not be an add-on on page 24 of the manifesto but something that is central to a decent country." That was Tony Blair speaking at the South Bank Show Awards early in 1997. A year later the same audience was confronted by a very different reality: museum charges under consideration, the slimming down of the music curriculum in primary schools, cuts to the Arts Council grant, the closure of Liverpool Playhouse and Greenwich Theatre.

In the end, it all comes down to what sort of society we want. In a Thatcherite free-market society, the box-office is the ultimate arbiter of taste: far from widening choice, it actually narrows it down. But if we want to live in a country that provides art that is affordable, accessible, that combines the best of the past with present-day innovation, then we have to accept that the state, or the local authority, has a responsibility to pay for it. It is not a question of elitism: it is a matter of making the best of the present and the past available to everyone. As Matthew Arnold said, "the men of culture are the true apostles of equality."

If the arts world at the moment is filled with disillusion and despair, it is because the Labour Party, elected with such high hopes, has failed to grasp that simple truth.

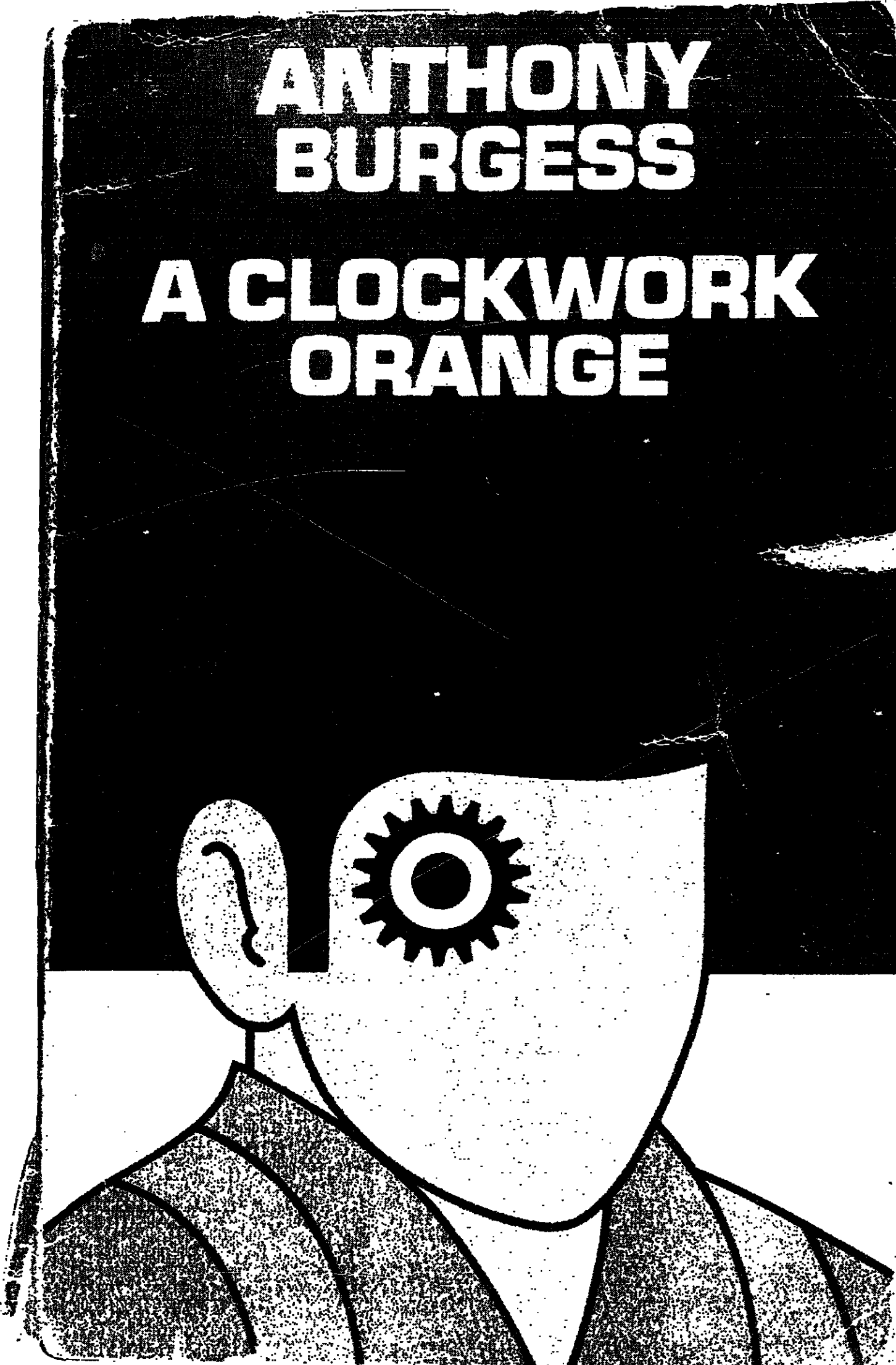
THE BEST OF MY WEEK

...the best of my week...

arts

This book wrecks lives. Just ask that poor Mister Kubrick

But why did the director ban his own film of *A Clockwork Orange*? And why, 24 years later, does it still haunt him? **Jonathan Jones** reports



It was dark, my brothers, when we came to the house of this film director, called Stanley Kubrick. We crept in and found this stumpy bearded man typing away. "What is this, then? Is it a film what you are writing? Eyes Wide Shut? That's a fair gloopy title." I started to raze the pages and scatter his over the floor. My droogs grabbed Stanley by the rookers. I hit him and he went boo hoo hoo and his not dripped plenty of the old red krovyn. Then I got a length of chain and began to swing it beautiful in the glazies and they bled real horrorshow. ... At this point Home Counties householder Stanley Kubrick wakes up.

Stanley Kubrick's attempt to edit *A Clockwork Orange* out of his life has failed. It's 24 years since he decided to suppress the film in this country, yet his story of a murderous young thing who enjoys nothing better than a bit of ultraviolence until the state re-educates him through aversion therapy remains the director's most talked-about film. On his death bed, Kubrick may find himself crying out, "I die! But that bastard Alex will live for ever."

Yet Alex is not just Stanley Kubrick's creation. The cult of *A Clockwork Orange* represents the revenge of author over auteur. And it will be rubbed in this Saturday when Radio 4 broadcasts Anthony Burgess's own dramatization of his novel.

The story of *A Clockwork Orange* has often been told as the

triumph of film over fiction. Burgess resented having to appear on chat shows to defend the film while Kubrick "pared his nails" in the knowledge that "his achievement swallowed mine whole". But Kubrick had no idea how to control Burgess's wayward adolescent. He expected people to be shocked and disturbed by Alex DeLarge, his bowler-hatted, codpiece-wearing, white-costumed anti-hero. Instead they were weirdly exhilarated. Alex's charming, evil voice was Burgess's poisoned gift to Kubrick.

"Stanley was shocked by the reaction to the film," says Kubrick's friend the film critic Alexander Walker. "He had a genuine apprehension that unbalanced people might take action against him personally."

Kubrick and Burgess could not have been more opposed as artists. Kubrick has completed three films in the 25 years since *A Clockwork Orange*. He avoids public statements. Burgess was an unruly writer who admitted he found revising books boring. He would always be abandoning them to compose a symphony, learn a language or write in *The Observer*. After speaking up for Kubrick in 1972, Burgess suspected he was being used "to glorify an invisible deity". Kubrick's reticence enhances his charisma. Burgess's garrulousness led him to accept an invitation to talk about *A Clockwork Orange* on a disastrous radio programme hosted by Jimmy Savile.

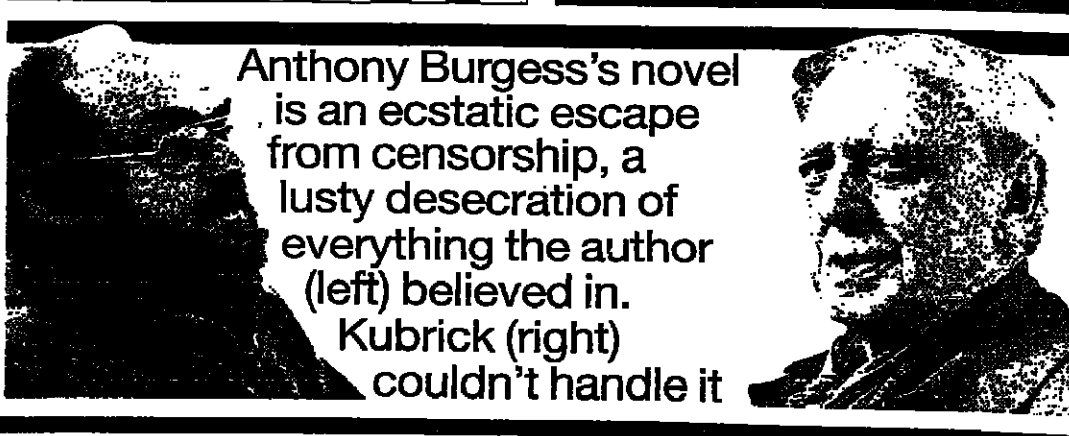
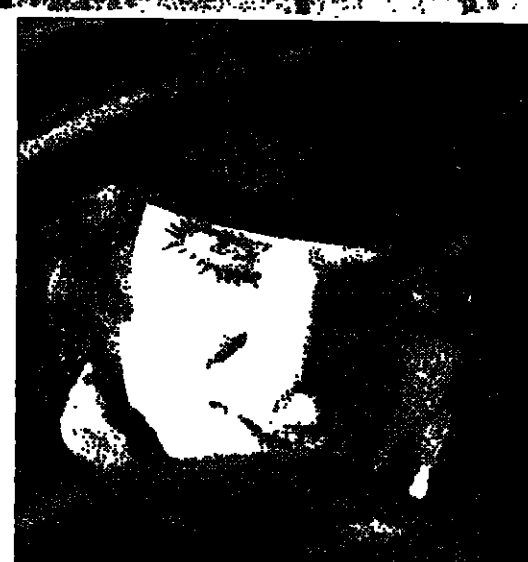
To read Burgess's novel, written

in 1962, is to savour the richest, most ambiguous voice in postwar British fiction. "You are seduced by Alex's voice," says Alison Hindall, director of tonight's radio play. "You are seduced into liking him."

Burgess gives Alex, a 15-year-old rapist and murderer, an acute sense of beauty and the language in which to express it. When Alex talks about slashing someone with a knife and in the same paragraph pays attention to "the stars stabbing away as it might be knives anxious to join in the dratsing", we share his excited sense that nature itself is urging him to maim and kill. Alex uses boisterous, horrorshow words to aestheticise his violence. The words he loves are thick, visceral lumps of sound — groodies for breasts, tolchoking for hitting, yarlies for testicles — good for talking about bodies but bad at making bodies sound human.

Burgess gave Alex his own language — Nadsat, a nonsensical mixture of Russian, the King James Bible and babytalk. His rough word-play suggests the speech of the young Capulets and Montagues in *Romeo and Juliet*. When Alex encounters victims who don't speak his language, their standard modern English sounds impoverished compared with his bravura spiel. "How dare you enter my house without permission!" protests the writer whose wife he rapes. "Never fear," replies Alex. "If fear thou hast in thy heart, O brother, banish it forthwith."

A Clockwork Orange was one battle in Stanley Kubrick's war



Anthony Burgess's novel is an ecstatic escape from censorship, a lusty desecration of everything the author (left) believed in. Kubrick (right) couldn't handle it

The book that launched a thousand headlines... Burgess's 1962 novel. Below left, anti-hero Alex and his sidekicks dish out a little ultraviolence in Kubrick's film. Alex was played by Malcolm McDowell, below right

with the novel. He's filmed Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* and Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*, locked in conflict with the Western. Individualism the novel stands for. In Alex, he met his match. Alex is a perfect fictional character, like Humbert Humbert in *Lolita*, because his subjectivity is so absolutely embodied in the perverse language of the novel. But while Kubrick was able to discipline Humbert into his own narrative structure, Alex slipped the net.

Kubrick is a moral fabulist and his films are hallucinatory revelations of good and evil. He transformed *Lolita* from a decadent literary confection to a sardonic study of the abuse of power. He wanted to make *A Clockwork Orange* a savage satire on the aestheticisation of violence. Anthony Burgess, too, regarded himself as a moral man, and specifically a Christian man. But in writing *A Clockwork Orange* he abandoned his Catholicism in linguistic play. *A Clockwork Orange* is an ecstatic escape from censorship, a lusty desecration of everything Burgess believed in. Given a Bible to read in prison, Alex imagines crucifying Christ, relishing the prospect of "helping in and even taking charge of the tolchoking and the nailing in, being dressed in a like toga that was the height (sic) of Roman fashion."

The moral panic that convulsed Britain in 1972 was as much about Burgess's words as Kubrick's images.

A Clockwork Orange Gang Attacked. My wife, screamed the Evening Standard. It was the surreal language that caught the eye. Anthony Burgess dubiously claimed he took the title from a Cockney phrase, "as queer as a clockwork orange". The title is explained as an image of brainwashing. Yet Alex, with the inarticulate body of a wind-up toy, rookers for hands and arms, nogas for legs and feet — is as queer as a clockwork orange from the start.

Were Kubrick to relent and allow Warner Brothers to re-release *A Clockwork Orange* tomorrow, the madness that gripped Britain in 1972 would burst out all over again. "It would probably be worse," says Alexander Walker. "I doubt the film could rely on its previous certificate." That, of course, was X, the equivalent of today's 18.

To JG Ballard, who watched in disbelief as David Cronenberg's film of his novel *Crash* was attacked by the Daily Mail and banned in the West End, Britain in the nineties is a more authoritarian place than ever. "We're in a time when people need to identify new vices that they can attack with moral fervour," he says. He recalls how Cronenberg compared coming here to "arriving on a very small, strange planet where people rush to judgment about things they haven't seen". Ballard is waiting for a New Labour hit squad to arrive at his front door to re-educate him. "Heaven knows what these prissy, preachy people who rule us have got up their sleeves."

Kubrick's suppression of one of his own films in the country he makes his home has become part of his oeuvre, an act of will as impressive as 2001, his scariest. The Shining. The most frightening image in *The Shining* is probably the manuscript novel consisting of nothing but the sentence "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" repeated thousands of times. Kubrick's suppression of *A Clockwork Orange* is a similar breakdown of communication. The director is acting out the kind of systems failure that recurs in his films.

The ban was not even discovered until 1979, when, as John Baxter relates in his biography Stanley Kubrick, his cameraman John Alcott requested a copy for a talk at the National Film Theatre. Kubrick's response: "John, I know what you want, and I'm sorry I can't let you have it" — sounds like the voice of HAL, the spaceship's computer in 2001, going mad.

A Clockwork Orange is all the more fascinating for being taboo, all the more seductive for being a secret. It's tempting to see Kubrick's suppression of his film as a strategy to enhance its glamour, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Kubrick was genuinely frightened of the character he called Alex Burgess. *A Clockwork Orange* remains Burgess's Ode to Joy. "There was a huge note of optimism to the young thugs," JG Ballard told me. "They were having a good time." This wasn't what Kubrick intended at all.

A Clockwork Orange will be broadcast at 10.15pm tonight on Radio 4. The book is published by Penguin, price £5.99.

Dance music needs big business like a hole in the head, says **Paul Shurey**

More cash, less dash

PROVOCATIONS

As we approach the 10th anniversary of the first acid house/rave "summer of love", the culture it spawned shows no sign of running out of steam. Despite having grown into a multi-million-pound industry, despite dominating the national charts and being featured in adverts for anything from building societies to soft

drinks, dance music has retained its energy and credibility. And, unlike any previous music trend, it has resisted being swallowed up by big business. Why?

Mainstream music was reluctant to embrace the rave explosion, in part because of the media's hysterical reaction to Ecstasy and an inability to appreciate the new machine-made sounds. The result was that a self-sufficient dance music industry evolved indepen-

dently from the establishment. Dance culture adopted features from virtually every previous youth cult (the anti-authoritarianism of early rock'n'roll, the idealism of flower power, the hedonism of the mods), and particularly the DIY ethic of punk (with a difference — the new home-computer technology used to make dance music made costly studio time unnecessary). The big five record companies have struggled to sell dance music,

conditioned as they are to marketing music in one way: on the rock and pop star conveyor belt. With a few notable exceptions, those producing dance music have been reluctant to play this game, staying true to the egalitarian, anti-personality ethos of the rave. Significantly, current UK album chart-toppers The Propellerheads have chosen to remain with the indie label Wall of Sound rather than be seduced by the majors.

Where the dance music industry has worked with corporate operators, it has been through necessity rather than a desire to be part of the traditional entertainment business.

Laws introduced to curb warehouse and outdoor dance parties (particularly the Criminal Justice Act) forced rave promoters either to take their events into mainstream nightclubs or join with traditional festival organisers like the Mean Fiddler Organisation to obtain the licences needed for all-night outdoor events such as Tribal Gathering.

Through the nineties, club owners and rock promoters have become increasingly dependent on established dance party organisations to fill their nightclubs. Many mainstream club owners, imagining they had identified the formula to fill their establishment, have attempted to ditch the dance organisation promoting a weekly night,

only to see their takings shrink to zero. This demonstrates another important feature of dance culture — the sophistication and brand awareness of its audience. Essential to any successful club night is a respect and credibility earned over years — a commodity that money cannot buy.

In addition, the fluid nature of dance culture has meant that anyone seeking to make a regular profit from it must have a genuine passion, or they will quickly find themselves floundering, with their finger lightyears away from the pulse. The dance audience is from the easily-bored post-TV generation, and those who work in dance music must avoid complacency at all costs.

Dance culture is a veteran of many battles with gangsters, authorities, the musical establishment, corporate raiders and a hostile media. This adversity has created a will to retain the ethics and integrity of dance culture's early days and steered it for the battles ahead as a new generation of entrepreneurs take over. Having proved its strength over a decade, the revolution will continue, and inexorably overwhelm the reticent animal that is rock'n'roll.

Paul Shurey is director of Universe, the creator of Tribal Gathering, which is currently engaged in a court battle with the Mean Fiddler Organisation over the ownership of the name.

Opinion 150

Big chance for Strand in Tote Hurdle

Dorans Pride can answer the call in Hennessy

Sandown Jackpot programme

Uttoxeter runners and riders

P. Hickey	-27	96	28.1	-2.83	P. Papp	18	177	20.4	-4.79
Barrows	21	107	19.6	-38.78	D. Richardson	17	69	25.4	-29.60
Reddy	15	71	21.1	-4.05	W. Ruppert	17	75	22.7	-1.65
Reddy-Weber	15	82	18.3	-10.78	P. Hobbs	17	90	118.9	-34.20
Orlando	14	58	21.1	+1.15	K. Bailey	14	49	38.8	-48.02
Johnson	14	117	1.2	22.87	D. Starnes				

Five Nations Championship: France v England

Robert Armstrong in Paris believes Clive Woodward's bold strategy may fail today if the key contest is for speed supremacy

England in world of fantasy

JEREMY GUSCOTT today makes an international comeback that seemed only a remote possibility a fortnight ago. The 32-year-old Bath centre, far from easing himself gently after a seven-month lay-off with a back injury, has claimed centre stage in front of an 80,000 crowd for the first Five Nations match at the Stade de France.

Indisputably one of the two or three world-class players in the England line-up, Guscott will be helping his team seek their first victory in seven matches and their first win over France in four outings. His sudden changes of pace, deft handling and insouciant eagerness to exploit space will, it is hoped, give Clive Woodward's ambitious side the cutting edge they need.

Perhaps the Bath player's most valuable asset, though, is his remarkable big-match temperament. No one will ever forget the cool drop goal for the Lions in Durban last summer, that example of stylish opportunism summed up his combined imagination and precise technique.

England will need to click into gear if they hope to bring Guscott, the fly-half Paul Grayson, and the full-back Mike Catt into action. For one thing Mark Regan's throw into the line-out will have to improve 100 per cent; for another, England's front row must come to terms with Christian Calmano, Rafael Ibanez, the new captain, and Franck Tournaire, arguably the toughest scrummaging trio in the championship.

There is no question that England have come here to take on the French at their own celebrated game: they aim to clear the ball away quickly from the breakdown, use their midfield backs to play in the faces of their opponents, and frequently switch the point of attack to launch their wings deep into French territory. Woodward's new-age vision embraces near-continuous movement and instinctive decision-making executed at stunning pace and with a minimum of

feast by South Africa in November I never had any doubt their coach Pierre Villieureux would go back to the drawing board and pick a fast young team with the intention of playing the game faster than we do," said Woodward. "I think we've chosen a balanced side with traditional English strength in the pack

Stade de France teams

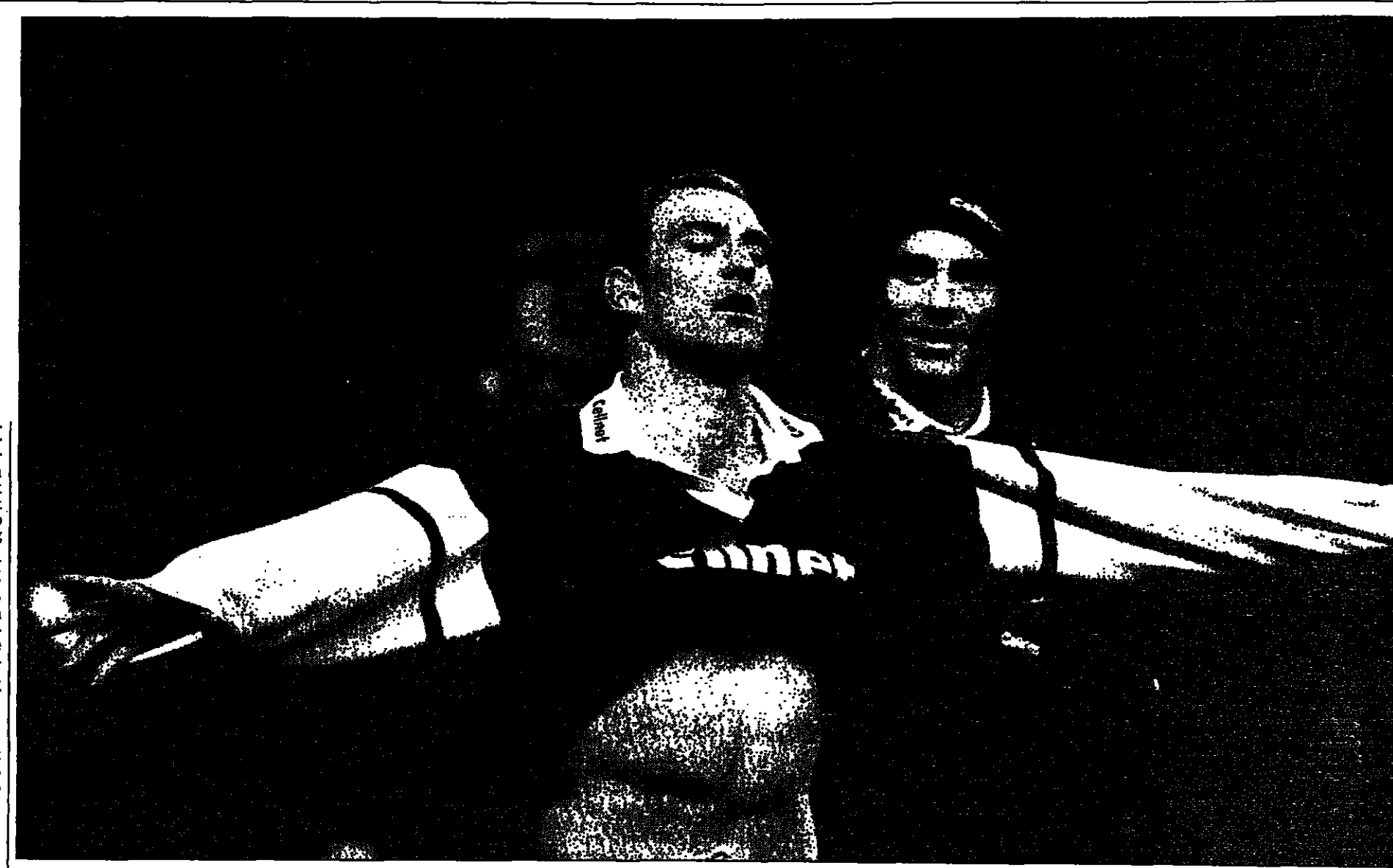
France			
14 Bernard-Cabre (Prov)	13 Lapeyron (Prov)	12 Lapeyron (Prov)	11 Lapeyron (Prov)
10 Lapeyron (Prov)	9 Lapeyron (Prov)	8 Lapeyron (Prov)	7 Lapeyron (Prov)
6 Lapeyron (Prov)	5 Lapeyron (Prov)	4 Lapeyron (Prov)	3 Lapeyron (Prov)
2 Lapeyron (Prov)	1 Lapeyron (Prov)		
England			
11 Widdow (Leicester)	10 Widdow (Leicester)	9 Widdow (Leicester)	8 Widdow (Leicester)
7 Widdow (Leicester)	6 Widdow (Leicester)	5 Widdow (Leicester)	4 Widdow (Leicester)
3 Widdow (Leicester)	2 Widdow (Leicester)	1 Widdow (Leicester)	

Dallaglio fires his side by toiling at coal face

Robert Armstrong on the Wasps flanker who will lead by example in Paris today

LAURENCE Dallaglio has still to savour the special pleasure of leading his side to victory as England captain, yet after only four games in the hot seat it is difficult to believe the Wasps flanker has not been there for years.

Calm, cheerful and reassuring, Dallaglio possesses the steady self-confidence and easy-going rapport with other players that early on marked him out as a natural leader with a vision of what was good for English rugby.



That shrinking feeling... Lawrence Dallaglio fits England's bill perfectly even if his shirt seems a little on the small side

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

onstrate that he wants to be involved." Dallaglio's father is Italian and he was once offered a university scholarship by the Italian government. But he makes a point of reminding you that he is a patriotic Englishman despite a yen to play international rugby in such places as Bologna and Rome.

Before the England captain can go and compete in the land of his fathers, however, full rugby membership of the official European family in the wake of their run of Test wins.

"Italy have shown they were worth bringing into the Five Nations Championship. There is no doubt that their

competition for England and Wales as well as the other home nations. "We would definitely welcome the extra competition. Rugby needs global identity — you cannot just have four or five nations who pull away from the rest and are capable of winning the World Cup.

"We want to develop a World Cup in which spectators want to see every game because it's exciting and competitive. We need sides like Italy and Canada for world rugby to get stronger, just as it's in New Zealand's interest for England to be strong."

On the home front the autumn was a chastening experience for the ambitious Dallaglio, who took part in a lengthy sequence of matches for club and country which failed to produce a win. Still, if it is true that defeat rather than victory is the litmus test of a captain's character, then the man who was a pillar of strength on last summer's Lions tour to South Africa has come through his time of trial stronger in mind and body.

"I've been encouraged by the discovery that we can compete with the All Blacks in specific areas and the realisation that there are no limits to our potential for improvement," he said. "We know England players can win plenty of first- and second-phase ball but, having said that, we have to work

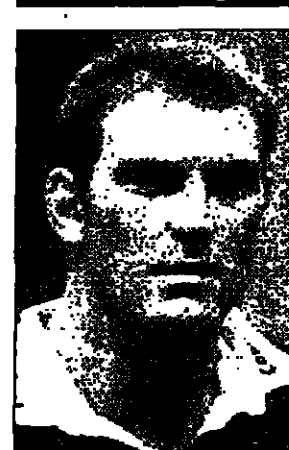
Europe's fastest back rows primed to leave the Paris earth scorched

Whatever the state of the Stade de France pitch for today's confrontation, it runs the risk of being scorched by more than those hastily summoned hot-air blowers. With scant respect for the traditional trench-warfare tactics embraced in Paris by Brian "Pit Bull" Moore and friends, the rival coaches are committed to giving a new attacking dimension to the Five Nations.

In pursuit of their grand vision, both teams are relying on greyhounds, not least in the back row. England may never have fielded a faster, more wide-ranging trio; France are accelerating down the same autours. "The one thing the French are worried about is our pace in the back row," insists Clive Woodward. "These guys allow us to play the wide game I want." In other words, catch us if you can.

Analysis by Rob Kitson

Electric English



Lawrence Dallaglio
Club: Wasps. Age: 25.
Ht: 6ft 4in. Wt: 165st 5lb.
Caps: 16 (+ Lions 3).



Neil Back
Club: Leicester. Age: 29.
Ht: 5ft 10in. Wt: 14st 4lb.
Caps: 8 (+ Lions 2).



Richard Hill
Club: Saracens. Age: 24.
Ht: 6ft 3in. Wt: 15st 12lb.
Caps: 9 (+ Lions 2).

Lightning French



Philippe Benetton
Club: Agen. Age: 29.
Ht: 6ft 3in. Wt: 15st 12lb.
Caps: 48.



Olivier Magne
Club: Brive. Age: 24.
Ht: 6ft 11in. Wt: 15st.
Caps: 9.



Thomas Lièvremont
Club: Perpignan. Age: 24.
Ht: 6ft 2in. Wt: 16st 7lb.
Caps: 1.

You know your back row has a bit of fizz when your blind-side, traditionally hewn from solid, bulker material, made his early name as a pacy seven expert. Dallaglio, England's captain, has also played his first seven Tests as an open-side before the emergence of Richard Hill allowed him to switch across to his favoured No. 6. Still deceptively quick, as he showed when kicking ahead and outpacing Justin Marshall and Jonah Lomu to the line at Twickenham in December.

This dynamic player would have won far more England caps in more enlightened times but he regularly suffered from selectors unable to see beyond the end of their measuring tapes. He is Mr Perpetual Motion, whose ability to pop up from apparently nowhere in open play offers the continuity that the national coach Clive Woodward craves. The Lions manager Fran Cotton said "his footballing skills opened everyone's eyes" in his midweek appearances on last summer's South Africa tour.

Most other countries would kill to have him at open-side; with Neil Back around, Clive Woodward has avoided agonising by sticking both in his team. What Hill may lack in No. 8 experience is compensated for by his hard work. "Gives everything whether you are going forwards or backwards," says Lawrence Dallaglio. Spent his career at flanker before starting in the middle of the back row against South Africa in November. The All Black draw, in which he scored a try, was probably his finest England display.

The only member of the France back row to survive the sobering South African thrashings. Has been on the international scene since 1989 but injuries have restricted his contribution in recent seasons. Broke an arm against Scotland in the 1995 World Cup and missed France's entire Five Nations season last year with a fractured jaw. Played at No. 8 in both famous French wins in New Zealand in 1994, sealing his reputation as an unyielding customer. Highly respected around the world.

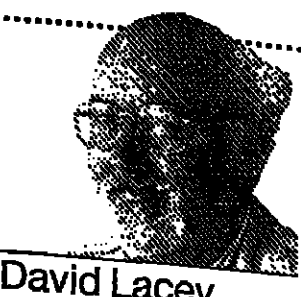
The Grand Slam made his name last season, in the absence of the injured Philippe Benetton and Laurent Cabannes. His bleached hair was conspicuous, so too his pace and relish in scoring the try of the match in the annihilation of Scotland at the Parc. Jean-Claude Skrela did not select him for either Springbok Test. In 1993 he played for France Juniors against Richard Hill of England. France won 23-18. Last year at Twickenham, when the two were rematched, Magne and France triumphed again.

One of seven rugby-playing brothers from a Catalan family, four of them active in the French first division. His elder brother Marc is also in this weekend's squad but the powerful Thomas carried the big responsibility of filling Abdel Benazzi's massive boots. Benazzi's injured knee has cleared a path for the young hopeful who debuted as Philippe Benetton's replacement against Wales 17 months ago. With an established No. 8, Fabien Pelous, in the second row, France expect fireworks behind him today.

Munich: Forty years
The day that was
Speed take
the Dalglish
bill to £21m

Munich: Forty years on

'The day Edwards died a light went out in English football that was not re-ignited fully even by the 1966 triumph'



David Lacey

FOR MANY Manchester United supporters the Munich air crash is a defining, not a memory. At this distance in time it cannot be anything else. A 30-year-old United fan can no more easily relate to the events of 40 years ago than a person of similar age in 1958

could identify with the Armistice of 1918. In this instance, of course, the generations are bonded by following a football club, and there are enough memorials and memorabilia at Old Trafford to remind people of what happened when the team's BEA charter flight crashed on take-off after stopping in Munich to refuel on the way back from a European Cup match in Belgrade.

With the approach of its 40th anniversary the tragedy has again been recalled in articles, books and broadcasts. Yet it is still difficult to convey, to anyone not around at the time, the impact the news made on that chilly Thursday evening in February 1958.

The full horror of what had happened did not become apparent until people read their newspapers the following morning. Instant television coverage was a long way off and BBC radio did not issue news bulletins around the clock.

It was known that some players, officials and journalists had been killed and that Matt Busby was alive. When it was realised that the fatalities included two England players, Roger Byrne and Tommy Taylor, the senses went numb. For more than a fortnight there was the consoling thought that Duncan Edwards, although terribly injured, would pull through. The day that Edwards died, a light went out in English football which even the winning of

the World Cup eight years later could not fully re-ignite. The reaction to the Munich tragedy was one of shock followed by sadness, and then something else: anger, deep and irrational feelings of anger that so much should have been lost through a whim of circumstance. English football felt cheated, and in a way it was.

United are by no means unique in seeing a team destroyed in an air crash. Nine years earlier Torino, then the Italian champions, were wiped out at Superga. More recently, in 1993, 18 members of Zambia's squad died when the aircraft carrying them to a World Cup qualifier against Senegal crashed into the Atlantic.

What happened at Munich, however, left its mark worldwide. Later, Geoffrey Green of the Times was in Belgrade with another English team when one of the local fans approached him. The man was carrying a creased photograph of the Busby Babes and on each of the eight who died he had marked a cross in red ink.

To appreciate the impact of the disaster on English football it is necessary to understand the changing nature of the game in this country at that time. In the early Fifties England had suffered a series of jolts to their self-esteem: the national team were beaten in the 1950 World Cup Finals 1-0 by the United States, roundly defeated 6-3 at Wembley by Hungary in 1953 and then thrashed

7-1 in Budapest the following summer. The Hungarians inspired a new breed of English coaches, convinced the home product had to adapt to keep pace with developments abroad.

In 1954 the back-page headlines hailed Wolverhampton Wanderers as world champions after they had beaten Horved, the Hungarian army side for which Ferenc Puskas and several other leading internationals played, 3-2 at Molineux. Stan Cullis's Wolves were an outstanding team but tactically they were little different from the Arsenal of the Thirties.

Manchester City took some heed of what was happening elsewhere by using Don Revie as a deep-lying centre-forward in the manner of Nandor H-

degsuti, whose unorthodox movements had caused England's defenders so much confusion at Wembley. Tottenham had long since been wedded to push-and-run. But until Busby nurtured an entire crop of young talents at Old Trafford, players with the technique to compete with the best in Europe on equal terms, English club football lagged behind Spain and Italy.

It was the freshness of the Babes that caught the imagination and won United admirers both at home and overseas. Byrne's ease in front of TV cameras and microphones and the United captain's lucidity at a time when players tended to be seen but not heard further convinced football followers

that here was something rather special. The deaths of Byrne, Edwards and Taylor tore the heart out of whatever hopes England cherished for the 1958 World Cup. Forty years on and another England team are looking for success in another World Cup to a another caucus of United players. David Beckham, Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt and Gary and Phil Neville, along with Teddy Sheringham and possibly Andy Cole, have been handed an unfinished script on a time long ago. There can be no happy ending, Munich will always be a tragedy, but at least Alex Ferguson's generation has the opportunity to show what might have been. And so far they have not done badly.

Speed takes the Dalglish bill to £21m

Michael Walker

GARY SPEED joined Newcastle for a fee of £5.5 million yesterday after five weeks of increasingly acrimonious wrangling during which his relationship with Everton's fans and the club manager Howard Kendall went sour. The Welsh midfielder, who signed a four-year deal, is expected to make his debut at home to West Ham today.

Speed's arrival on Tyneside takes Kenny Dalglish's spending in his 12th month in charge at St James' Park to £21 million, though he has recouped the same amount through selling players such as Faustino Asprilla and Les Ferdinand. The manager yesterday insisted he has "plenty more" money available.

His latest purchase is expected to play on the left in the functional 4-4-2 formation with which Dalglish won the title at Blackburn. With Andreas Andersson alongside Alan Shearer and Keith Gilliepie on the right, all Dalglish now needs to replicate his Rovers line-up is a Colin Hendry-style centre-half.

"I am glad to be here," said the 28-year-old Speed. "Newcastle doesn't have to sell itself really. I have been unsettled at Everton since the start of the season and once you hear of the interest you are eager to pursue it."

Kendall, however, let rip at the conduct of the player he made captain at the start of this season. "Maybe what we will have to do now with players we would like to sign is to ask them to put in written transfer requests and ask them not to play for their particular clubs."

"We were very determined to hang on to the player but he was equally determined to move on, and he elected to do certain things to try to escalate the deal," added the manager, who named Duncan Ferguson as team captain and Dave Watson as club captain. The sports minister Tony Banks has overwhelmingly rejected calls for a return to terracing, saying it could hamper England's bid for the 2006 World Cup.

"Tony Banks has made it clear that this is something which is not on the agenda," said a ministry spokesman. Brazil were held 1-1 by Guatemala in the Gold Cup at the Miami Orange Bowl yesterday, their second shock result of the week following Tuesday's 0-0 draw with Jamaica.

Tottenham have failed to have Stephen Clemence's sending-off in the FA Cup defeat at Barnsley wiped from the record. Charlton's Matt Holmes is to seek legal advice after breaking his leg in a challenge with Kevin Muscat in the 3-0 FA Cup replay defeat at Wolves on Tuesday.

Arsenal withdraw Keown from Chile game as Hodgson hits out

ARSENAL yesterday withdrew their defender Martin Keown from the England squad to play Chile on Wednesday.

Keown, who suffered a hamstring injury in December, hopes to play in the FA Cup tie against Crystal Palace on Sunday week. But the Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told the England coach Glenn Hoddle that the centre-back was not available for the Wembley friendly.

"I'm very disappointed," said Keown. "I've got used to the idea but no one likes to have to let go of an opportunity like that."

Blackburn's manager Roy Hodgson has criticised Hoddle for ignoring his club's players. Hodgson, who defended Chris Sutton's decision to pull out of the B squad, said Tim Sherwood, Stuart Ripley and Jason Wilcox deserved to be included. "All three of those players merit a look in," he said. "I am disappointed that our good work this season has not been recognised."

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The Observer

Work, the new recruitment section. See Business.

Capital reckoning: Arsenal and Chelsea clash twice in 10 days



Arsene Wenger

Appointed October 1 1996

Win ratio: 46 per cent

Average number of goals scored per game: 1.82

Average number of goals conceded per game: 0.67

Major signings: Patrick Vieira (Marseille) £2.5m, Frank Gendron (Sunderland) £2.5m, Nicolas Anelka (Paris St-Germain) £200,000, Alex Maninger (Chelsea) £200,000, Matthew Le Tissier (Southampton) £2m, Steve Collier (Preston) £1.5m, Emmanuel Petit (Middlesbrough) £1.5m, Luis Boj (Middlesbrough) £1.5m, Alberto Morero (Preston) £150,000, Marc Overmars (Ajax) £2m, Chris White (Middlesbrough) £2m

Major signings: Paul Diaw (Middlesbrough) £1m, Eddie McManis (Middlesbrough) £200,000, David Miller (Preston) £250,000, John Hartson (West Ham) £2.2m, Andy Linington (Crystal Palace) £150,000, Stephen Morris (Preston) £150,000, Matthew Ford (Preston) £200,000, Les Hogg (Preston) £200,000, Ian Stacey (Preston) £200,000, Paul Shaw (Middlesbrough) £200,000, Paul Watson (Middlesbrough) £200,000, Glenn Hoddle (Preston) £150,000, Peter Smith (Preston) £150,000



Ruud Gullit

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Playboy and the Professor, Part III

Martin Thorpe on two foreign managers whose high-flying sides meet tomorrow

ONE is a serious but polite Frenchman with a Germanic air who lives for football. The other is a laid-back, slightly arrogant, jokey Dutchman who lives for football, his own designer label, television punditry and the 19-year-old girlfriend who follows two wives and has just been delivered of his fifth child. Ruud Gullit also does pizza ads.

The contrast is stark: John Lewis and Armani, Prof and the Playboy, IQ and GQ.

This season Arsenal are leading Chelsea 2-0 after a league win in September and the first-leg victory in the Coca-Cola Cup semi-final ten days ago. Tomorrow sees another league meeting, and February 18 the semi-final denouement.

Overall the managerial records of Arsene Wenger, after 15 months in charge, and Gullit, after 20 months, are much

the same. Chelsea's goals for and against column betrays the more cavalier approach but, while Arsenal finished third last season, Gullit has the edge in silverware.

Only five foreign managers have made it to the English top flight. Ossi Ardiles and Aston Villa's worst signing before Stan Collymore, Dr Joze Venglos, flopped. Christian Gross is heading that way. So what makes Wenger and Gullit so special?

They say the dreadlocked one is cool. But listen to a self-styled expert on the subject talking about Wenger. "He doesn't bully his players into performing for him," says Ian Wright. "He just looks at you through those big specs and says: 'You are not letting me down, or your team-mates, or the club who pay your wages or even the supporters. You are cheating yourself. Can you live with the fact that you are cheating yourself and fail-

ing to maximise your ability? That's not just brains. That's man-management."

Far from cool, Gullit's method of letting people know they are not performing is decidedly cold: he drops them, and with little explanation.

Players are silently urged to look at themselves. Gullit met their resistance to his idea for a squad system with the same batcher diplomacy: anyone who did not like it could go.

Gullit's argument that the squad system keeps players' legs and minds fresh is countered by continuing doubts about leaving out Mark Hughes here, or Gianluca Vialli there.

But Chelsea currently sit second in the Premiership and pretty in the Cup Winners' Cup and the Coca-Cola Cup. It must be working.

Not that Gullit changes his team as much as is made out. He rotates his four strikers but otherwise, injuries and suspensions permitting, he employs a cast of regulars.

Wenger would play his best team at all times if he could,

and tactically also the Prof is more rigid than the Playboy, a solid 4-4-2 man, rightly praised for re-introducing the passing game to English football.

Last season Gullit, a passing man himself, switched between 4-4-2 and 3-5-2, though using 4-4-2 this season backed fired with the team's recent poor run and he decided last week to revert to 3-5-2.

It makes sense. His personnel are better suited to the latter as Frank Leboeuf is a sweeper not a centre-back, while Greame Le Saux and Dan Petrescu are better playing at wing-back than stuck as defenders or midfielders.

Critics of Wenger will say that the absence of Dennis Bergkamp has exposed Arsenal's shortage of creative options and also the lack of ready-made striker cover given Wright's penchant for injury and suspension, plus his recent dip in form.

Whenever foreign managers are mentioned, the word "diet" is not far behind. But Wenger and Gullit do not eat from the same plate on this.

The Frenchman has employed nutritionists and asked the players to look at their whole lifestyle, from drinking alcohol "right down to putting no sugar in our tea or coffee on match days because it lowers our energy levels," says Wright.

When Gullit took over at Chelsea, he sacked the reflexologist, the faith-healer and the nutritionist. He knew a lost cause when he saw one. "They must have it. What can I do?" Gullit just trusts the players to look after themselves, though he does employ a fitness coach.

Of course, the pair's pursuit of success has been helped by the fact that they inherited relatively successful teams and fat chequebooks. Gullit also has a special pulling power as a world star.

Both have also experienced the pressure at the game's top levels. But to manage successfully in the Premiership, a foreigner needs two other key attributes. First, an understanding of the special ingredients that go into English football. On the pitch, that means pace and commitment but style, too: lots of games and none of them easy.

Before joining Arsenal, Wenger was a huge fan of the English game and studied it closely. Gullit was a Chelsea player for a year before stepping up.

The second item in the foreign manager's Premiership survival kit is a command of English good enough to put over his ideas and personality to the players and the media.

The Prof and the Playboy have all this. The fact that Christian Gross does not may explain a lot.

A N Other

ORIGINALLY a left-winger, this intelligent, athletic footballer became one of his country's outstanding full-backs. His pace brought a new dimension to the position and, though he found himself on the wrong end of a 7-1 thrashing in only his third international appearance, he was capped 33 times in a row. In a famous creche he was the natural leader. His name is among several in football's thoughts just now. Last week: Kevin Ratcliffe (Everton), Dundee, Cardiff City, Derby County, Chester City.



Performance of the week: Martin Bullock (Barnsley), whose pace and vision did much to knock Tottenham out of the FA Cup at Oakwell on Wednesday.

Scottish preview

Rangers put Gascoigne's name in the frame for starters

Patrick Glenn

GLENN HODDLE will surely be as pleased as Walter Smith that Paul Gascoigne is showing signs of making a complete recovery from the groin strain that has restricted his recent contributions for Rangers. With England's friendly against Chile only four days away, the England midfielder could start the Scottish champions' game against Dunfermline today. The Rangers manager said last week that the groin prob-

lem Gascoigne has carried all season meant he was unable to train for three days after a full 90 minutes' action.

Gascoigne played a full game for Rangers reserves on Tuesday but the signs are now more hopeful. "Of course the reserves aren't as good as played at the same pace as first-team matches," said Smith. "But he does appear to be better. So he should play [today]—maybe."

Marco Negri, the Italian striker who has not played for since January 2 because of an eye injury, has been cleared

to head the ball and should feature today at Ibrox but the goalkeeper Andy Goram has uncrunched.

Rangers' challengers, Celtic and Hearts, meet at Tynecastle tomorrow with the Edinburgh team desperate to avoid a fifth successive defeat by the Old Firm this season.

Hearts may have to field the inexperienced 22-year-old Roddy McKenzie in goal because of Gilles Rousset's groin strain, while Celtic's worries concern their leading scorer Henrik Larsson and the in-form midfielder Jackie

McNamara. The Swede Larsson was taken off in Monday's win against Aberdeen with groin trouble, although Celtic are optimistic; McNamara has knee problems but is improving.

Scotland will start their qualifying campaign for the 2000 European Championship with a run of four home games in their first five matches.

SCOTLAND QUALIFIERS: 1996 Sept 5 Lithuania (a), Oct 10 Estonia (h), Oct 14 France (h), 1998 Mar 27 Scotland, Mar 31 Czech Rep (h), June 5 Faroe (a), June 9 Czech Rep (a), Sept 4 Bosnia-Herz (a), Sept 9 Estonia (a), Oct 9 Lithuania (h)



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France and England kick off the Five Nations Championship

Time for heat of battle to replace hot air

Paul Hayward
reports from Paris
where an old rugby
rivalry today has a
new battleground

THREE bleary-eyed Englishmen with country accents were found staggering around the bowels of the Stade de France yesterday. It was not England's front row but a set of agricultural barbers with giant hairdriers. Nigel Felton's team from Northampton saved today's Five Nations match in Paris. Now England must make the French wish they had left the tundra untouched and abandoned the game.

On the eve of the first rugby international at France's new national stadium the England captain Lawrence Dallaglio climbed alone to the highest tier to gain a general's perspective of the field of play. Let no one say the Stade is a £250 million folly beset with problems. It's a glowing cathedral which seems to float masterfully above the choked roads and industrial detritus of Saint-Denis four

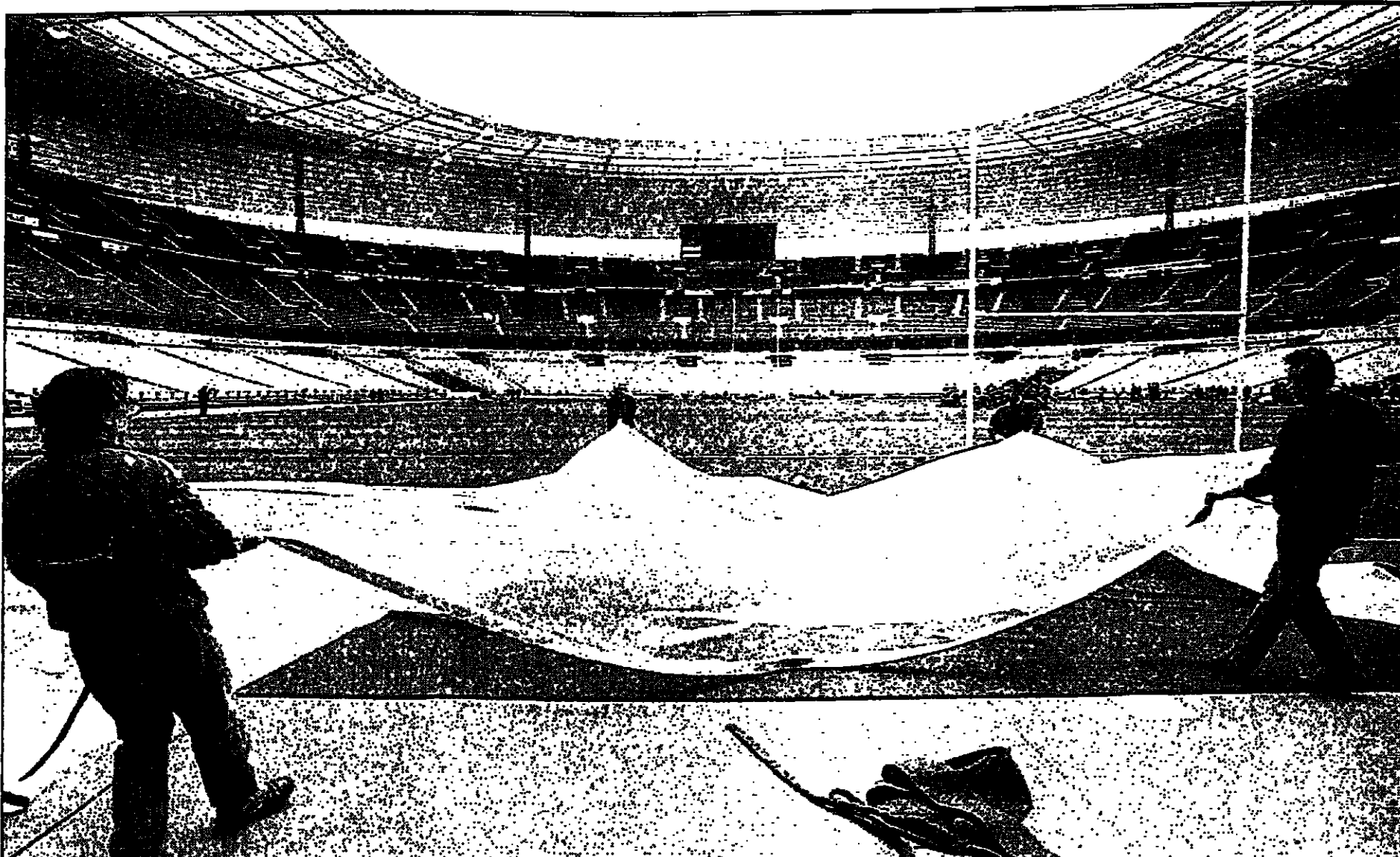
miles north of the city. The dusty, honking Parc des Princes has been shed like an old skin.

With the covers off a previously frost-bound pitch England practised their drills on the turf that Brazil will float over in the opening game of the World Cup on June 10. The Rolling Stones, the first major post-World Cup attraction, will doubtless move a bit less fluently.

Unless the Welsh dragon is spitting fire, today's game may amount to an inverted climax with the big Five Nations heave-ho decider arriving only 80 minutes into the championship.

France versus Spain at football is the only other international to have been played at the Stade. The financial legacy and the burden of expectation that comes with such a lavishly appointed new ground will tighten French stomachs more than English.

Twickenham seats only 3,000 fewer bums, so Dallaglio's men are accustomed to craning their necks in search of the sky. At Twickers there ought to be a free pair of binoculars with every ticket; in this Parisian sporting emporium there is a far sharper sense of intimacy and audience involvement.



No cover up... Nigel Felton's pitch-rescue team remove the rubber sheet which helped to thaw out the frostbound Stade de France in time for today's game. PHOTOGRAPH: ADAM BUTLER

Though England ran up a sequence of eight consecutive victories over France in the early Nineties they have now lost three on the trot to Les Bleus. The English have not scored a try in the French capital since 1992 when Jon Webb, Rory Underwood and Dewi Morris dived over. Rugby being a more Darwinian affair these days, there are only six survivors from the side who surrendered a half-time lead of 206 to lose 23-20 at Twickenham last sea-

son. That was the first time in 475 internationals since 1871 that England had handed over such a commanding mid-point lead.

The Northampton pitch-doctors, packing up their gear, had finished breaking the ice and were given tickets for the match ("For that, boys, we've been all over the papers back home," one said).

The team they worked so tirelessly to assist are on a run of six internationals without a win, though recent

form certainly counts against the French. England's 25-26 draw with the All Blacks two months ago was a revelation. France's 52-10 defeat by South Africa wrecked their morale and had the selectorial outfall flashing again.

From the French there was much fawning over England's achievements, with the coach Jean-Claude Skrela expressing a level of fraternity that is unlikely to be copied by the competing packs.

"England appear to be in

total control of what they are doing, harnessed by a coach who has clear objectives," said Skrela. "Clive Woodward is creating a new image for the national team. The evolving process will take time, but his commitment towards an expansive game is total." The France captain Raphael Ibanez, meanwhile, called England "probably the best team in Europe".

Not the sort of build-up one associated with the days of Wade Dooley and Brian

Moore, but home addresses and coaching manuals will not be swapped when the kick-off drops and the forwards clash mightily for the first time.

"France are at their most dangerous because they're an unknown team, a fresh team," said Woodward as Paul Grayson practised his kicks. The England players seemed impressed rather than overawed by the grandeur of their surroundings, pleased, perhaps, to be break-

ing in a pitch that will be used for a football World Cup final.

"If any individual can't relish the experience of playing in this stadium he shouldn't be here," said Woodward. "It's the adrenalin rush of playing in front of 80,000 and millions of TV viewers. As an old player, I envied them when I got here. They're very lucky guys." They won't look it, when the Stade de France erupts with French fervour.

Half-century for Lara as Fraser strikes for England in second Test

BRIAN LARA, who spearheaded a West Indies fightback in Port of Spain, was caught by his opposite number the England captain Michael Atherton off Angus Fraser for 55 as the home side were reduced to

135 for six with 20 overs left on the second day of the second Test. Fraser had taken five of the wickets.

Lara had put on 76 for the fourth wicket with Shivarine Chandernaul before Fraser had the latter

caught at first slip by Graham Thorpe. Fraser had already taken two wickets as England vied for control and earlier the Middlesex seamer had resisted bravely for 1½ hours to make 17 as his side strug-

gled to 214 all out. Fraser, struck on the helmet by the day's first ball, featured in a ninth-wicket stand of 42 with Nasser Hussain, who ended on 61.

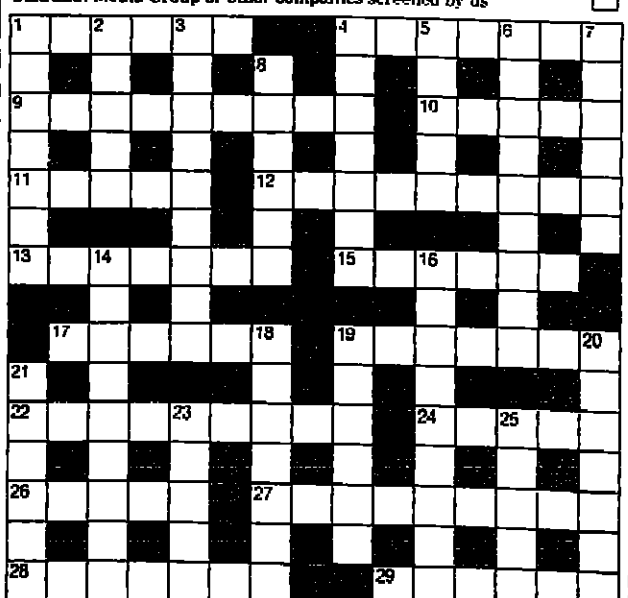
Mike Selvey, page 21

Guardian **COLLINS** Crossword 21,192

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Set by Bunthorne

Across

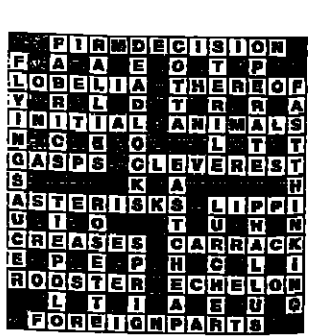
- 1 Lettuce consumed by Irish broadsides? On the contrary, it's an Iberian diet (6)
- 4 Ascertain, as it were, dead one is covered (7)
- 9 19 across of 29, after 21 by 1 across, takes 18 on 14s (9)
- 10 Of take Proust's sea shell (5)
- 11 "5,1 across... 15 upon... in 7" (Kaats) (1,4)

- 12 Bacon at Shakespeare's opening with little time to smoke (5,4)
- 13 Petition when rate revision follows rent reduction (7)
- 15 Thus Handel's worship is coming back fast (6)
- 17 Ambitious victim... (6)
- 19 ... returning 14 in Rome's downfall! (7)
- 22 Yast Leaves to treat 16 (3-6)
- 24 Dine out with £1,000? Blued it all in? (5)

- 26 "Measure for measure" with Terry (5)
- 27 Not for nothing King Canute wrecked this American island (9)
- 28 Hydrocarbon Euterpe needed quite a lot (7)
- 29 Villa rising here (6)

Down

- 1 Church holding Pro-Am knockout match (7)
- 2 Clear soap (5)
- 3 Despite smooth and glossy comeback, boats are more comfortable on them (4,5)
- 4 Film composer first made America (7)
- 5 Porter's exit? (5)
- 6 Spirit guide who avoids his duties (3-6)
- 7 See 11
- 8 Apple fungus around Kent (6)
- 14 T-twister on tour (9)
- 16 Mouthpiece tied up perhaps with not looking well! (9)
- 18 What is sweet, for example, and never given up? (7)
- 19 Some boldness, energy and asceticism in one (6)
- 20 Expelled 19 across with jollification in Italy (7)
- 21 De tour de force debacle (6)
- 23 Room at the inn also for Besant's resurrection (5)
- 25 Oral tradition of the kitchen knife (5)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,191

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